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ABSTRACT

While the building and printing industries flourished in pre-Civil War Columbus, manufacturing languished. The manufacturing base grew and diversified from 1820 to 1850. Few unions emerged, and those that did seldom lasted long. During the Civil War business and manufacturing increased to serve the camps and prisons established in Columbus. When the war ended, Columbus's workers launched the first concerted effort to build a labor movement. In August 1869 the arrival of the first train of the Hocking Valley Railroad introduced a new chapter in the city's industrial history. By World War I, industry had migrated out of the downtown area. Workers were excluded from a major say in city affairs, confined to overcrowded and inadequately served neighborhoods, and trapped in low-paying, dirty, demanding jobs. The characteristic pattern of the labor movement until the 1930s emerged: workers unionized during prosperity and retreated with recessions. World War I stimulated the economy; peace brought a depression. But because of the city's diverse economic base, it did not feel the depression as severely as other locations; nor did it experience the prosperity of the 1920s to the same degree as other communities; hence, increasingly, the word "moderate" described all national trends as they applied to Columbus. World War II had the greatest impact upon Columbus's labor movement. Public employment doubled, and the manufacturing sector expanded dramatically. Curtiss-Wright's air force factory work force was unionized shortly after it began production in 1941. For the past 2 decades, the challenge for organized labor in central Ohio has been to launch new initiatives in the face of a dramatically changing social and economic environment. (Contains 27 related readings.) (YLB)

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Working Paper Series

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A HISTORY OF LABOR IN COLUMBUS, OHIO 1812—1992

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WP-010

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I
ARTISANS IN AN AGRARIAN SOCIETY
1812-1865

The city of Columbus was the creation of politicians and land speculators. It did not exist before 1812, when the Ohio General Assembly picked the area to serve as the state capital. Ohio had not had a permanent capital since becoming a state in 1803. Until 1810 the legislature had met in Chillicothe, and then moved to Zanesville while it considered a more permanent site. A number of central Ohio communities courted the honor, including Lancaster, Newark, Worthington, and Dublin.

One of the least likely candidates was the small village of Franklinton on the west side of the Scioto River near its confluence with the Whetstone (Olentangy) River. Franklinton was founded in 1797 by Lucas Sullivant, who two years earlier had surveyed areas of central Ohio. Because of its central location, Franklinton served as the county seat until 1824 (when Columbus assumed that role), but Franklinton was basically a modest farm community. By 1808 it had a population of only a few hundred, a general store or two, three saw mills, and two grist mills to serve local farmers, but it had no post office. Rather, the town hired someone to ride once a week to Chillicothe to mail letters and fetch the post. Clearly these were not the resources to attract the state capital.

What Franklinton did have, however, was several very resourceful entrepreneurs. While leaders from competing communities talked of the civic virtues of their towns, men from Franklinton waved money and land before the legislators. Basically they offered to lay out a city on 1200 acres of undeveloped land on the east side of the Sciota River opposite Franklinton. The developers would give the state two ten acre plots of land, and would spend $50,000 dollars to build a penitentiary and various other state buildings upon them. The developers calculated that they could make a

healthy profit selling off the remaining city land to incoming residents. Since the land and buildings would cost the state nothing, the legislators were delighted with the plan.

Thus, Columbus became the first planned state capital in the United States, with Joel Wright made in charge of carving a city out of virgin forest. It is interesting to note how physically different Columbus turned out to be from the other planned capital--Washington, D.C.--laid out two decades earlier. Pierre L'Enfant and the other designers of the nation's capital were fearful of the masses and developed a city with diagonal streets for the quick movement of troops and strategically located circles for the placement of cannon should the populace ever emulate their Parisian sisters and bothers, then engaged in the French Revolution. The builders of Ohio's capital had no such paranoia about the masses--perhaps because they correctly anticipated the area being dominated by yoemen farmers--and laid out Columbus along a simple grid pattern with the key east-west artery being given the name of Friends Street (now Main), with High Street being the north-south road.

On Thursday, June 18, 1812--the same day that Congress declared war on Great Britain--the first town lots went up for sale. Among the eighteen individuals purchasing property that day were several artisans, including German-born Christian Heyl, who operated a bakery and a small "place of entertainment" next to his log cabin home.

Columbus grew slowly during its first decade, having a population of only 700 in 1816 when it became incorporated as a borough and elected its first mayor, a twenty-two year old farmer named Jarvis W. Pike. Pike's main accomplishment during his term was to clear High Street of tree stumps. In 1816, also, the first bridge went across the Scioto River, tying the new community to the few services and artisans of Franklinton. By 1820 Columbus had about 200 houses and 1,450 people, a population that would increase to 2,435 a decade later.

Who were the early settlers of Columbus? By and large they were native- born and farm-oriented. One pioneer woman caught the diversity of

the inhabitants when she commented upon receiving pumpkins from her neighbors who had migrated from Vermont, corn hominy from former Virginians, and sourkraut from the Pennsylvania Germans immigrants. By 1820, there were also 120 African-Americans in Franklin County. Some Virginians, like the Sullivants, brought their slaves to the new territory and classified them as "hirelings" to get around the Northwest Ordinance's prohibition of slavery in the area. Other African-Americans were free-blacks who worked mostly in the taverns and hotels of the area.

The first "industry" to dominate in Columbus was construction. Since both public buildings and private dwellings had to be built where hardwood forests stood, Columbus served as a magnet to men who had some knowledge of the building trades, however rudimentary. Compared to other locations in the nation, wages for construction workers were high. The wife of one carpenter informed relatives back east that: "Carpenters do their work by the piece; journeyman's wages one dollar per day and found; bricklayers four dollars per thousand including lime, sand and tender." If a carpenter could land a government contract, he could set his family up for a comfortable life. It was this opportunity that attracted carpenter David Deshler from Easton, Pennsylvania to the city in 1817. Using a gold watch as part of the down payment, he bought a lot on Broad Street just west of High. The money he earned from building projects eventually served as the foundation for the family's banking enterprises. In a similar manner, John Laughrey, describing himself as a mechanic and builder, arrived in Columbus in 1817 from western Pennsylvania and quickly established his worth. In 1823 he became the city's forth mayor.

The ability of men with a knowledge of construction and a knack for politics to attain a prosperous existence in the city continued throughout the 1812-1865 period. The classic case is that of Oliver Perry Hines, a native of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, who learned bricklaying while a youth. In 1834 Hines made his way to Columbus and took up his trade, bidding successfully on a number of government projects, including in 1839 the new

Franklin County Court House. With his earnings he established his own brickyard on Livingston Avenue and prospered. In 1858, Hines diversified and joined William Miller in building the Columbus Paper Mill. Later Hines engaged in the banking business, occupying a building on the corner of Town and High. Along with his successful business ventures, or perhaps because of them, he served several years as a country commissioner and two terms as country treasurer.

Most workers on early construction projects, of course, did not parley their trade into such fame and affluence. Some gained enough funds to purchase a small homestead and participate in subsistence farming. Others simply packed up and moved West to another boom town once the project on which they were employed was complete. And still others, like the Irish who came to the area in the late 1820s and early 1830s to build the feeder canal and segments of the National Road, stayed in Columbus and formed a pool of general, unskilled labor employed in constructing housing for a population that doubled every decade except the 1850s.

A second industry that prospered almost from the moment the General Assembly began meeting in the newly built state house in 1816 was printing. The state government itself contracted extensively for printing and bookbinding. And it also stimulated private printing, blank-book publishing, and numerous newspapers. Printing became the first major industry in the the city where the gap between master (or owner), and journeyman became marked, and as a consequence as early as 1832 journeymen printers formed a typographical society, which survived for several years. In the 1850s, as we shall see, they again organized and established the longest lived union in the city's history.

While the building and printing industries flourished in the pre-Civil War era, manufacturing languished. Columbus-Franklinton was essentially an agricultural service community with state government imposed on it. It possessed in these early decades few of the characteristics needed for significant industrialization. First, the basic raw materials needed for industrialization were limited to the products of local farms. It would not

be until the 1870s and the arrival of the Hocking Valley Railroad that the vast resources of Southeastern Ohio would be easily accessible. Second, unlike, say, the New England textile towns of Lowell, Lawrence, or Fall River, Columbus lacked sufficient falls along the Scioto and Olentangy Rivers to provide water power for mills. This problem was eventually solved through the steam engine, with the Ridgway Foundry, the first large manufacturing plant in Columbus, converting to steampower in 1830. The third factor slowing the development of manufacturing in Columbus was the lack of nearby markets. The surrounding towns were, like Columbus-Franklinton, also small agricultural communities. And fourthly the city lacked an adequate transportation network to tap the more distant markets on Lake Erie, the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and to the East.

Columbus citizens were extremely optimistic that the transportation problem would be solved by the arrival of the National Road and the Ohio and Erie canal in the early 1830s, but this was not to be the case. Hauling goods along the National Road, also called the Cumberland Road and now route 40, was time consuming, expensive, and not conducive to bulky loads. It took an average of forty-eight hours, for instance, for a conestoga wagon to make the 100 miles journey from Wheeling to Columbus. The Ohio and Erie Canal was able to handle heavier loads, but Columbus was not directly on the canal. Rather, it had to make do with a "feeder link" running from the corner of Rich and High Streets to the canal town of Lockbourne. In short, both the road and the canal stimulated business and some manufacturing in the city, but they did not launch a min-industrial revolution in central Ohio.

The manufacturing that did develop in Columbus during the pre-Civil War era more often than not either serviced or processed products from the surrounding agricultural area or met the needs of travelers passing though on their way further West. Census data on manufacturing activities in Franklin County in 1820 highlights two points. First, of a city population of 1,450 and a county population over twice that size, only 100 people--no doubt all male--were engaged in manufacturing. And secondly, all but the

makers of nails and farming utensils were using raw materials from the local farms and forests.

The requirement of local farmers for tools, agricultural implements, and household items led to the growth of the city's first significant factory, the Columbus Foundry of Joseph Ridgway & Company, which began operating in 1822. Ridgway's principal product was the Jethro Wood Plow, which reportedly was the first such plow to have interchangeable parts for easy repair in the field. The first carriage and wagon shop began operations prior to 1819 using native hardwoods. Three years later, a second shop was in operation and, by 1826, J.W. White was constructing a variety of coaches, wagons, hacks, and gigs. He made many coaches for the Ohio Stage Company which had its headquarters in Columbus, and he is often considered to be the pioneer in the great carriage-making industry that eventually developed here.

Over the next three decades, the manufacturing base of Columbus grew and diversified. By the mid-1830s the city hosted numerous copper, tin, and iron smiths, who imported their raw materials from distant parts. Other artisans made rope, leather, furniture, and agriculture tools. In 1827, Gill and Greer came to Columbus from Pittsburgh and opened a sheet metal shop and foundry. This became the Franklin Foundry, which in 1838 began production of stoves and plows, and in 1848 began building steam engines and railroad rolling stock. Finally, a boot and shoe industry emerged in the city and employed over 200 people by 1850.

While a few firms in the pre-Civil War era had a hundred or more employees, most artisans and mechanics in the city labored in shops of eight or fewer employees and had a rather personal relationship with the owner, who as often as not worked alongside them. Class lines were still very fluid: with a few good breaks a worker could accumulate enough funds to open his own shop or store; with some bad breaks, a shop owner could be thrown back into the ranks of the mechanics. Moreover, being a small, walking community in which the classes were not sharply segregated, social divisions were more subtle than latter on. This intimacy was no doubt a

reason why the few early unions that did arise disavowed sentiments of class conflict. The Mechanics Beneficial Society that was formed in the 1830s, for example, was open to both mechanics and manufacturers. Two decades later, a similar desire for interclass harmony was expressed by the city's journeymen carpenters when they established a short-lived union. In announcing their actions on March 28, 1853, the carpenters insisted that "we do not seek or claim to take advantage of boss carpenters in this movement . . . ."

For the most part, a sense of egality and republicanism prevailed in the city. No stigma of inferiority was attached to an early artisan because of the nature of his work (although ethnic biases existed). Numerous manual workers rose to places of importance in the city. Mentioned has been made to Deshler, Laughrey, and Hines. Another example would be Eli C. King, the third mayor of the city, who settled in the area in 1814 as a tanner and quickly became Montgomery Township's justice of the peace, and then mayor of Columbus in 1820. Columbus's 15th mayor, Smithson E. Wright was also an artisan-made-good, having started out in the city as a printer, then parlaying his skill into part-owner of *The Ohio State Journal* in 1835. When he became mayor in 1843 he was also the leader of the Mechanics Beneficial Society, which was devoted to protecting the interests of both mechanics and manufacturers. His successor as mayor, Alexander Patton, who served from 1845 through 1849, had been born to poor parents in Hanoverton, Pennsylvania and learned the carpenter's trade through an apprenticeship. Arriving in Columbus in 1813 at the age of 21, he soon found work on numerous government building projects, including the first state house. What the examples of Deshler, Laughrey, Hines, King, Wright, and Patton suggest is that in pre-Civil War Columbus artisans were often able to advance themselves both economically and politically within the growing city, and that they shared equally in the governance of the town alongside manufacturers and merchants.

Most artisans, of course, did not rise to positions of community

leadership. Rather, if they stayed in Columbus, they led the everyday lives of ordinary people. But again, their concerns were not as much class concerns as they were community concerns. They too wanted civic improvements like better roads and drainage, not only to attract more businesses, but also to make the city healthier.

Pre-Civil War Columbus was a very unhealthy environment. The city experienced an inordinate amount of sickness and death from influenza, cholera, typhoid, and a host of other "fevers". The letters of Betsy Green Deshler, wife of carpenter David Deshler, constantly report illnesses. In 1821 she wrote her parents back east: "We have had nothing but sickness and trouble . . . since June. David . . . was confined to bed for nearly seven weeks, part of the time entirely deranged. Without help I took care of him 14 nights in succession." In October, 1823, she observers, "The sickness of this country does not abate." Betsy herself dies of illness in 1826 at age thirty, leaving behind a ten-week-old baby for her husband's next wife to raise.

In the summer of 1833 cholera invaded the city and killed off over two-hundred of the three thousands residents, and would have taken more if many had not fled town until cooler weather. Another cholera epidemic appeared in the summer of 1849 and abated in late September after killing 162 (and another 116 at the Ohio Pen), only to return in the summer of 1850 to claim 209 more lives. Residents of the low-lying, working class neighborhoods in Franklinton and along the feeder canal were particularly hard hit by epidemics since the germs spread among the flies and mosquitoes in the poorly drained swamplands and floodplain near their homes.

Another concerns on which workers found common interest with neighboring farmers, merchants, and manufacturers was the unstable money supply and inflation. While farm grown food and locally made products were reasonably inexpensive, the high cost of transportation kept the price of imported items extremely high. Compounding the problem was the limited amount of hard money in circulation to pay for things. Columbus was a

semi-barter economy for many years. In the early 1820s, Betsy Deshler informed her parents that "David works every day, and for the last five months has not got one dollar in money . . . . All the work that is done in Columbus is for trade, trade, and no money. It makes it difficult to get along . . . ." The money situation did not improve significantly for many years. Accordingly, in 1850 when ITU #5 was first formed: "the compensation of the printer was very low, money was not plentiful, and in many instances money received by them was comparatively worthless . . . . The newspapers of the city were compelled to take advertisements from grocery, dry goods and clothing stores, etc., under the agreement that a part of the contract price be paid in goods, and in consequence the printers were given a portion of their weekly earnings in order for groceries, drygoods or clothing, leaving but a small amount of cash for each on pay days." Apparently, one effort to do something about the "money" crisis occurred in 1838 when the Mechanics' Beneficial Society--composed of workers and manufacturers--opened the Mechanics' Savings Institute. Unfortunately, we know nothing about the outcome of this experiment.

Workers and other citizens of Columbus were not quite sure what they could do about the sickness that invaded the city or that lack of hard money, but they had a clear focus on the problems created by the Ohio Penitentiary. Shortly after the construction of the first prison in 1815, inmates were put to work making products that were sold in the city to pay the warden's salary and operate the institution. Prison labor was also used to rebuild the prison in 1819, to complete the Columbus feeder canal in 1827 when epidemic laid-low many an Irish laborer, and again to rebuild the prison between 1832 and 1837. Beginning in 1834, the state's system of convict labor was changed allowing private manufacturers to employ convicts in prison workshops. The first contract for such labor was made with Peter Hayden on June 10, 1835 and called for fifty to one hundred convicts to work at manufacturing saddlery and harness trimmings. By 1839, 245 convicts were being subcontracted at such tasks as shoemaking, tailoring, and bucket

making. A number of companies, including Triumph Brass, which had begun operations in Franklinton in 1850, relocated next to the penitentiary to be near its convict labor force.

The low paid work of the inmates, who numbered well over five hundred by the Civil War, posed a distinct threat to both local workers and manufacturers. For the next century, workers in Columbus--often in alliance with their employers--would lobby to restrict or end the state's convict labor system. Much of the energy of the Mechanics Beneficial Society in the 1830s was spent unsuccessfully opposing convict manufacturing at the Ohio Penitentiary. On July 16, 1839, for instance, mechanics and other citizens rallied and passed resolutions opposing "a system . . . which brings the great state of Ohio into direct competition with the labor and industry of her own free citizens--a competition ruinous to the pecuniary interests and defrauding to the moral and social character of the mechanical occupations." Likewise, on December 27, 1850 the Columbus Typographical Society hosted a meeting to establish a state typographical society to mobilize opposition to plans to have the state penitentiary print school books and do government jobs.

The presence of cheap labor at the state prison, along with the money crisis and the unhealthy environment, led some workers to find Columbus an undesirable location and moved on to another settlement. Yet, others kept coming. As census figures reveals, Columbus's population grew dramatically every decade but the 1850s. But these figures hide the real degree of movement in and out of the city because as many as half the citizens living in the city in one census year may have moved on by the next census ten years later.

For the most part, those moving into the city were native born, and even Ohio born. Compared to Cincinnati, Toledo, Akron, Cleveland and other major cities in the state, Columbus has always had a higher percentage of its population born in America. The two large foreign-born groups which settled in the city before the Civil War were the Irish who settled on the north side of town, and the Germans who came in the late 1840s and early

1850s and built a community-within-a-community on the city's south side. By 1860, first and second generation Germans made up about one-third of the city's population, and one of the leading newspapers in the city until World War I was the German language *Der Westbote*. While the Irish tended to be agrarians or general laborers, the Germans were more likely to be artisans with a heritage of some union activity. The few short-lived trade unions that formed in the city before the Civil War--basically among carpenters, cordwainers, and printers--inevitably had a significant German membership and often utilized the facilities of *Der Westbote* for their meetings. One group formed in 1849, Industrial Lodge Number 11 of the National Grand Council of the United States was exclusively German. It remained in existence until the Civil War, when it disbanded so that its members could join the Union Army. After the war, in 1873, former Lodge members founded *Arbeiter Verein*, a secret German working-class society with the motto: "United we are victorious--separate we must surrender; union makes strength, science is power, as labor is the origin of all wealth."

The Germans, like other Columbusites, were just as likely to move out of the city as they were to move in. Indeed, during the 1850s--the decade that witnessed the highest in-migration of Germans--so many people left Columbus that the net population growth was a measly 3.7%, by far the lowest in the city's history. The gold rush attracted many west. On three different occasions bands of young men left Columbus for California, and countless other individuals went on their own. Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Texas also claimed a considerable number of former Columbus residents. The most interesting migration from the city, however, occurred in 1856 when an expedition of thirty-five Columbus Germans set out for the West. By November of the same year, the group had laid out a town in Nebraska and had called it "New Columbus." More than that, the main street was named Westbotenstrasse, after Columbus's German language newspaper. The following Spring, sixty more Columbus Germans migrated to New Columbus. Even though German migration to Columbus began wanning by the Civil War, and the city rather quickly returned to being over 85% native born, the

German immigrants left a distinct imprint.

The other ethnic group that had a distinct presence in the city was the African-Americans. Since the city's founding, Blacks constituted a significant subculture within Columbus. As early as 1840, 9% of the city's population was African-American, the largest percentage of any major Ohio city, and by some reports the largest of any major city north of the Mason-Dixon line. Why Columbus developed such a significant Black population is something of a mystery. Clearly, the Ohio General Assembly had done everything it could to discourage free Blacks from migrating to Ohio, including enacting a series of Black Laws from 1804 to 1838 that restricted the rights and activities of African-Americans. Patterned after southern slave codes, these laws required Blacks to furnish proof of freedom in order to live or be employed in the state; they required free Black immigrants to post $500 bonds signed by two Whites willing to guarantee their good behavior; they barred Blacks from public schools, the militia, jury duty, and testifying against Whites in court; and they prohibited interracial marriage. Although the Black Laws were not rigorously enforced, they nonetheless posed a continuing threat to Black security and served as constant reminders of African-American subordination.

The precarious place of Blacks in Columbus is suggested by the story of Jerry Finney, an African-American who had resided in the city for about fifteen years, working, like most Black males, at various service jobs, particularly as cooks and waiters in hotels and taverns. On the night of March 27, 1846 Finney was decoyed to the office of William Henderson, a justice of the peace in Franklinton. There Finney was arrested as a fugitive slave and turned over to the agent of the person claiming him, one Mrs. Bethsheba DeLong of Frankfort, Kentucky. Handcuffed and placed in a carriage that was ready at the door, Finney was whisked across the Ohio River and into slavery before his family and friends knew what was occurring or any legal challenge could be made. When the events became known, enough Columbus citizens were appalled that the local individuals

involved were arrested and placed on trial. Yet, while a Columbus jury found Henderson guilty, the state Supreme Court eventually reversed the decision. Nor were the legal efforts to liberate Finney in Kentucky successful. Finally, the African-American community and local anti-slavery groups raised sufficient money to purchase Finney's freedom and restore him to his family. Yet his life in bondage had so weakened him that he died soon after his return home.

It should be noted that the labor force of early Columbus was overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, male. Only a few women--mostly unmarried--worked outside of the home. Those who did were most likely Irish, German, and particularly African-American, and they labored as domestic servants, cooks, and laundresses. Until the Great Depression of the 1930s, these three activities would constitute the largest employment category for women. Women generally did not work as store clerks until after the Civil War, although *The Ohio State Journal* in 1853 reported that hotel keepers in Columbus were considering employing female waiters as a way to undermine unionizing efforts by males. Only tidbits of evidence suggest that women were employed in manufacturing. One of the first employers of young women was John French, who opened a drug store at the corner of High and Rich streets and employed unmarried women in a second floor workshop making various products for sale down below. By the 1840s women were also employed by Nathan and Joseph Gundersheimer at the rear of their clothing store making ready-made stock. For the most part, however, women were expected to marry young and assume control over a household and young ones who demanded constant attention.

Few unions emerged in pre-Civil War Columbus, and those that did seldom lasted long. Several factors accounted for this weak state of unionism, including the undeveloped economy, the sense of community, social mobility, the high population turnover, and the ease at which discontented workers could just pack-up and move on to a more suitable site. It clearly looked as if the Columbus Typographical Society, formally organized in February, 1851, was also destined for a short existence. No. 5

was initially founded to resist the establishment of a print shop and bindery at the Ohio Penitentiary. Successful in blocking that effort, in 1852 it lobbied, this time unsuccessfully, for the repeal of the state law that contracted government printing to the lowest bidder. In May, 1852 it sent delegates to a printers' national convention in Cincinnati, where it became chartered as National Typographical Union, Local No. 5, and it remained active for at least another year, but then became dormant. Six years later, journeyman printer Joseph T. Hayes, who had arrived in the city the year before, persuaded about twenty-four fellow tradesmen to meet in his third-floor room and rejuvenate #5. The stated objectives of ITU #5 were: "To cherish, protect, and promote the interests and rights of its members as workingmen, to cultivate the social ties existing between members of the craft, to abolish injurious privilege, and to bring all under the restraint of wholesome duty." For the first year of its new existence, until it could get a hall of its own, ITU #5 met in the office of the mayor of Columbus, again revealing that pre-Civil War artisans were not divorced from the community power structure.

Critical in making #5 the longest existing union in the city's history was the solidarity and sense of purpose forged when, within a year of its refounding, it engaged in the only serious strike it conducted for over one hundred years. The strike began on August 8, 1860 when *The Ohio Statesman* discharged several union members. This action culminated two months of tension between ITU #5 and the morning paper over the paper's refusal to accept the union's scale of prices. Besides picketing and warning printers from other cities to avoid Columbus, #5 started its own newspaper, *The Daily Evening Bulletin*, edited by Benjamin F. Lincoln, to mobilize public opinion on its side. *The Bulletin* aggressively attacked *The Ohio Statesman* and particularly a man named Hunnicut who had been brought in from Pittsburgh to break the strike. With the citizenry of Columbus behind it, after several months ITU #5 won its point, and *The Statesman* became a union shop.

Not long after the union's victory, on April 12, 1861, a surrender five hundred miles away at Fort Sumter in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina signaled the beginning of the end of an historical era in Columbus's labor history. From 1861 to 1865, American engaged in a bloody Civil War that impacted on the life of every individual and community. Before the war, Columbus had been pretty evenly divided about the central issue in contention--slavery and its extension into the western territories. After the firing on Fort Sumter, the majority of citizens supported the Union cause (although there was a significant minority of pro-compromise Copperheads). The German population and its newspaper *Der Westbote*, for example quickly moved from the Democratic to the Republican camp, and the German dominated Industrial Lodge #11 disbanded to fight for the Union. The city itself exploded with activity, as business and manufacturing increased to service the camps and prisons established there by the Union Army. Some trades like shoemaking and iron molding got a real boost from wartime orders, and so it is not surprising that workers in both crafts established themselves unions.

When the war ended in 1865 Columbus was thinking and acting more like an industrial city, and its workers were launching the first concerted effort to build a labor movement. Joining ITU #5, established in 1859, were other unions like the Iron Molders' Beneficial Society #98, organized in 1861; the Columbus Division #34 of the Brotherhood of the Footboard, started in 1865; Capital Lodge #167 of the Knights of St. Crispin, begun in 1866; and the German Butchers' Association, formed in 1867. Moreover, in January 1866, various union locals in the city, led by the Machinists' and the Molders' unions, banded together to gain greater influence by creating a city-wide organization, the Trade Unions of Columbus. The two chief concerns of the new central body were the rapid war-inspired inflation and the movement for an eight-hour work day. Clearly, a new chapter was opening in the labor history of Columbus. No longer were workers in Columbus artisans in an agrarian society, but participants in an increasingly more complex, industrializing nation.

II
STRIKES, SOCIALISTS, & SEGMENTATION
1865-1914

Between 1861 and 1865, the American Civil War set in motion a set of forces that transformed Columbus from a small, agrarian state capital to a far more diverse and cosmopolitan city. With the camps and prisons of the Union Army established there, manufacturing, trade, and business increased dramatically. The city's population, which had grown by a meager 3.7% between 1850 to 1860, exploded by 68.5%, or from 18,554 to 31,274, during the Civil War decade. This population growth, along with the equipment needs of the army, stimulated all typed of construction, manufacturing, and agricultural activity. While few new industries actually began functioning in the city during the war, the businesses already here expanded significantly. The number of metal and machine shops increased , shoe and clothing firms found a captive market at the military camps, and the carriage industry adapted to wartime needs. All in all, the war pulled Columbus out of the stagnation it had entered in the 1850s.

Yet, while the Civil War reinvigorated Columbus's economy, it was the arrival in August, 1869 of the first train of the Hocking Valley Railroad that introduced a new day in the city's industrial history. First, with fifteen rail lines entering the city by 1900, Columbus profited from a transportation "revolution". Most directly, the railroads afforded employment in the facilities they built. The Pennsylvania Railroad, for instance, had its second largest shop here, and all of the offices of the Hocking Valley Railroad were in Columbus. Among the indirect results of the transportation revolution were the establishment of firms like Buckeye Steel, which made couplers and other equipment for train, and the Columbus Rolling Mill, which in the 1880s produced more than 100 tons of rails a day. Moreover, the railroads spurred the rise of industries linked to the natural resources of southeastern Ohio. Coal was by far the most important resource, yet

timber, iron ore, and natural gas also played a part in attracting industries to Columbus. In 1877, for instance, the Lechner Manufacturing Company (soon to become the Jeffrey Manufacturing Company) began assembling coal-mining machinery and rotary drills for the nearby mines. Four years later, the Kilbourne and Jacobs Company started making mining supplies. In a similar fashion, the hardwoods imported from southeastern Ohio played a major part in assuring Columbus's place as a leading carriage and wagon manufacturer, and also as a prominent showcase and furniture producer.

By 1914 and the outbreak of World War I, Columbus had over 800 plants employing about 35,000 people, causing it to rank among the 40 leading industrial cities in the nation. Seven Columbus firms were the largest of their kind in the world. These were Jeffrey Manufacturing, Kilbourne and Jacobs, Wolfe Brothers Shoe Company, Capital City Dairy Products (makers of butterine), M.C. Lilley (regalia), Peruna Drug Company (patent medicine), and the Columbus Buggy Company. The principle foundries included the Carnegie Steel Company, the U.S. Steel Corporation, and the Columbus Iron and Steel Company. The other large industrial employers included Buckeye Steel, Federal Glass, H.C. Godman Shoes, Ralston Steel Car, and J.W. Brown electric automobile lamp company.

Clearly by World War I Columbus was no longer a provincial farm community, but, it is important to keep in mind, neither was it an industrial cauldron like Pittsburgh, Cleveland, or Akron. The U.S. census of 1910 provides a breakdown of the percentage of a city's workforce engaged in manufacturing and mechanical enterprises. 62% of Akron's workforce was so engaged, as was 56% of both Youngstown's and Dayton's, and 51% of Cleveland's. Yet only 41% of Columbus's workers were in manufacturing or mechanical pursuits, the lowest percentage of any of Ohio's major cities. On the other hand, Columbus only trailed the port city of Toledo in the percentage of the workforce engaged in trade and transportation (28% to 26%), and it had the highest proportion of any major Ohio city engaged in professional and personal service, 32%. In short, Columbus was an economically diverse city in which factory workers neither dominated the

population nor the labor movement.

Yet the rise of factories and the population growth they stimulated changed the face of the city. Around the turn of the century, a general migration of industry out of the downtown area occurred. Four new pockets of industrial activity emerged, each surrounded by a supporting workingclass community. The first was the First Avenue and Fourth Street district, near Jeffrey Manufacturing. A second was along the east bank of the Scioto River. The third centered on the northeast section of town around the railyards, and the fourth was the South Parsons Avenue area, nicknamed Steelton because of the plants of Carnegie Steel, Buckeye Steel, and Columbus Iron and Steel, were located there along with Federal Glass, Keever Starch, and Columbus Woodenware.

The movement of industry out of downtown was but one sign of the breakup of the old "walking city" and the segmentation of society. In the pre-Civil War era, when all urban activities had to be within walking distance of each other, a sense of community had emerged out of necessity. Because the city's more affluent citizens had to constantly pass through on foot and do business in working class and poorer neighborhoods, they had a direct interest in keeping these districts clean, safe, and healthy. But with the rise of the streetcar, which were horse drawn from 1863 to 1890 and then electric powered, that pattern changed. People could live further from work, commute cheaply, and avoid contact with certain undesirables. As a result the "streetcar suburbs" of the near north side emerged--what today we call Victorian and Italian villages--and the Main Street and Livingston Avenue districts blossomed. People of affluence could not only choose where to live but whom to live near.

What emerged, then, was the segregation of the population into areas more clearly defined by class, race, and ethnicity. Naghten Street was still "Irish Broadway," although some of its original residents, as their circumstances had improved, had moved north of the tracks and beyond. The south end was still a German stronghold, yet the more affluent Germans

were also beginning to move out into the prestige neighborhoods. The Black community which had been clustered near the corner of Long and High streets began to be pushed east as developers eyed their old neighborhood for commercial expansion. Finally, the clearly identifiable white working class neighborhoods included the Steelton district on the far south side, the Cleveland Avenue area north of the railyards, the Flytown ghetto where Thurber Village stand today, the so-called Middletown district which is the old Franklinton area renamed., and Sellsville area across the Olentangy from OSU, which also served as the winter quarters for the Sells Brothers Circus.

Further adding to the segmentation of post-Civil War Columbus was increased ethnic diversity. To be sure, compared to many heavily industrialized cities in the midwest and northeast, Columbus experienced only modest levels of immigration. In 1910, for instance, 38% of the city's 181,511 inhabitants were either foreign born or the sons and daughters of foreign-born parents. Cleveland, in contrast, had a population that was 76% foreign born and second generation immigrant. Indeed, Columbus ranked sixth among the state's seven major cities in terms of ethnic influences in 1910 (Dayton was last). Thus, at the very time when waves of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were altering the face of urban America, Columbus was only modestly impacted.

But impacted it was. Joining the Germans and Irish, who had arrived in the city before the Civil War, were Italians and Russians, Magyars and Welsh. Individuals of the same nationality tended to cluster together in residential proximity, but only the Germans were numerous enough to give a section of the city a distinct and long-lasting ethnic identity. In 1910, for instance, Ward 3 was considered by many Columbusites to be the Russian district since two-thirds of the city's 1,000 or so East European Jewish immigrants lived there. But in reality they shared that space with 103 Swiss, 112 Austrians, 1,147 Germans, 696 African-Americans, and 13,475 native-born whites. Likewise, in Ward 9, the 283 Italians in 1910 shared the area with 131 Greeks, 110 Austrians, 100 Hungarians, 2,675 African-Americans, and 6,275 native whites.

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Such ethnic neighborhoods appeared throughout Columbus, but the most famous ghetto was Flytown, a twenty-five block residential section on the near north side bounded by Goodale Street to the north, Denison Avenue on the east, Spruce Street on the south, and Harrison on the west. This area of cheap two and three-story brick and frame tenements served as the port of entry for the changing waves of new workingclass migrants to the city. "Those who remember Flytown," one former resident wrote, "still talk of the streets and alleys teeming with people, houses crowded shoulder-to-shoulder, and hawkers selling fruits and vegetables. And they talk of how people would gather in saloons, play cards there and visit." In the late nineteenth century hundreds of unskilled Flytown residents were employed by U.S. Pipe Foundry, Columbus Forge and Iron Company, The Commercial Paste Company, Franklin Lumber and Furniture Company, and the Columbus, Piqua, and Indianapolis Railroad. Over the years, Flytown's dominant identity went from Black, to Welsh, to Irish, to Italian, back to Black again with the great migration of the World War I era.

In a peculiar way, Columbus's workplaces were actually more ethnically segregated than its neighborhoods. The Marble Cliff Quarry Company, for instance, employed an almost exclusively Italian labor force until the 1930s, and build a company town--San Margarita--in which to house them. Likewise, the United Woolen Company moved its entire Italian workforce--including the immigrant parents of George DeNucci--to Columbus when its Parkersburg, West Virginia plant burned down. The numerous breweries in Columbus were solidly German, while roughly 3/4th of the employees at the Steel Rail Company were Welsh, hired on by the superintendent, a Welshman named Lewis. Another Welshman, David Price, rose to the position of foreman of all outside work at the Hayden Company, where he use his power to hire to fill the payroll with Welsh names. Least we forget though, the most exclusive employment segregation involved native white Americans, with firms like Buckeye Steel hiring few if any immigrant until the manpower crises of World War I.

Adding to the diversity of Columbus was its significant African-American community. While at the low end of the scale among major Ohio cities for percentage of foreign-born residents, Columbus continued to lead in the percentage of its population that was African-America. This group, however, experienced dramatically different historical trends from the city's other ethnic groups. While the Irish, Germans, Italians, and Jews all slowly but steadily gained affluence and moved into the mainstream of city life, Columbus's African-Americans rode a downward spiral to segregation. At the time of the Civil War and the abolitionist spirit that accompanied it, Blacks had attained a respectable place in the city's economic, political, and social life. Some crafts, like barbering were exclusively Black, and the city's most important African-American citizen, city council member Reverend James Poindexter, ran a shop located in front of the State Capitol that served most of the legislators. Blacks also worked as waiters and cooks in the leading hotels and restaurants, and some had broken into the skilled trades as blacksmiths, carpenters, plasterers and painters.

Yet the end of Reconstruction in the 1870s and the emergence of Social Darwinian theories, saw a renewal of racism that kept the city's African-Americans out of the new skills advanced by the transportation and manufacturing revolutions, and dwindled their representation among the old skilled trades from 21% in 1860 to less than 12% at the century's end. Whereas Blacks had had a complete monopoly on barbering at the time of the Civil War, for instance, by 1890 they controlled only 30% of the trade.

Such economic setbacks only mirrored the social and political retreat of African-Americans. The last two decades of the 19th century and the first two of the 20th witnessed the introduction of racial segregation where it had not previously existed in theatres, railroads, and the Columbus public schools. In some places like the Trinity Episcopal Church and the Hannah Neil Mission for Homeless Waifs, Blacks were excluded altogether. By the second decade of the twentieth century, racism had so intensified in Columbus that one observer noted that "the feeling against Negroes is bitter in the extreme."

A city thus fragmented by race, ethnicity, class, and residence no longer had the sense of community that had dominated the pre-Civil War era. The commonality of problems and interests that had led artisans and mechanics to join with merchants and manufacturers in the 1840s and 1850s, in the 1880s and beyond gave way to inter-group competition. From the end of the Civil War on, the city's elite viewed workingclass life as synonymous with immorality, and engaged in continuous efforts at "reform." The most prominent evil of the workingclass was deemed to be drink, which supposedly set the mood for the accompanying vices of gambling and prostitution. In 1866 a Columbus minister contended that the city of 30,000 contained 400 liquor shops, of which only 280 were licensed, 118 gambling houses, and 55 brothels. After concerted effort, the city council passed a Midnight and Sunday closing ordinance, which was largely ignored by workers who sweated in the shops and factories six days a weeks and only had the Sabbath for fun. One investigation, for instance, found only three of the 148 German owned liquor establishments closed on Sunday. In 1876, council followed up the closing law with the Waiter-Girl ordinance, forbidding females from working in saloons. The link between anti-workers, anti-ethnic, and Midnight and Sunday liquor closing appeared in speeches of members of the Citizen's League of Columbus, popularly known as the Law and Order League. Speaker like General John Beatty, a Civil War hero, banker, and crusader against alcohol, would constantly try to link strike and union activity with drunkenness.

Along with trying to reform blue collar lifestyles, the city elite maneuvered to weaken workingclass political power. The cost of campaigning in an ever growing and diverse city made it impossible for candidates from the laboring classes to win city-wide elections. Thus, whereas numerous mayors of the pre-Civil War period had begun life as artisans and mechanics, none after Reconstruction had true workingclass roots. Until 1913, however, workingclass and ethnic groups were able to gain some representation on city council because their candidates could afford to run in a small area like a ward. But the city elite successfully

weakened the power a council member from a particular subculture had through increasing and gerrymandering wards so that the native born, affluent classes dominated. Finally, in 1913, after four socialists managed to get elected, a new city charter established a seven member council elected city-wide. This innovation was suppose to eliminate political corruption and ensure that every council person would be responsible to every voter. In reality it eliminated entire social groups from the opportunity to hold office. Now, a candidate of modest means stood a poor chance of getting elected. From the passage of the 1913 charter until 1960, for instance, no black person served on city council. For the most part, workers were confined to supporting for election businessmen who had shown some sympathy for their problems.

And problems they had, for the forces of industrialization and urbanization had not treated the workingclass kindly. To be sure, a few skilled workers were able to improve their station, like the nine ITU #5 members, who with a $900 investment, launched the *Columbus Evening Dispatch* on July 1, 1871. Yet such social mobility was becoming increasingly difficult.

Columbus quickly gained a reputation as a low-wage city, a fact the city elite touted to attract new businesses, but that the workingclass felt less positive about, particularly given the high cost of necessities. In 1914, for instance, it took the average Columbus factory workers one hour and thirty-five minutes of work to pay for a dozen eggs, and 75 hours and 47 minutes to earn enough to buy a two-piece suit.

Low wages also confined the working classes to the least desirable areas of the city. These were neighborhoods, for instance, that were hardest hit by periodic overflowing of the Scioto and Olentangy Rivers, the worst flooding occurring on March 25, 1913 when 22 feet of water covered land up to the Hilltop and High Street, causing eight-year-old Charles Brush and his parents to flee their Buttles Avenue home in Flytown for the safety of High Street. Even without flooding, municipal services were primitive

and totally insufficient for the needs of a swelling population. In 1880, for instance only nine percent of Columbus's streets had been paved, and running water and sewers were available for the well-to-do only. Many a workingclass family had to take in boarders to make ends meet, while large numbers of immigrant men resided in rooming houses that operated on the two shift plan. The story is told of an Hungarian steelworker in a Columbus plant who when injured one day was sent back to his boarding house to recover. The next day, the boarding house boss came to the foreman and complained, "John must go to the hospital. You see, his work was night and sleep in day, but now he is home night and I have no place for him to sleep."

Conditions on the shop floor were not much better than in the neighborhoods. In an age before factory inspections and OSHA, plants were unsafe, hot, dirty, noisy, and physically demanding. Down in south Columbus, the steel mills and glass factories operated on two twelve hour shifts so the furnaces would not go down, and they did not change to eight-hours a day until the 1920s. A laborer at Buckeye or Federal could arrange to get one day off ever two weeks by working days one weeks and then, by putting in a twenty-four hour day, swing over to nights for the second week.

Compounding the everyday problems on the job and in the neighborhood were the periodic bouts of unemployment caused by economic downturns. In the 1870s, the mid-1880s, the 1890s, 1907-08, and again in 1913-14 the American economy went into tailspins. The Depression of the 1890s was every bit as sever as the so-called Great Depression of the 1930s. Even mild recessions, like that following the financial panic of 1907, brought disaster to Columbus as the Pan Handle Railroad laid off 800 men, Ralston Street Car Company let another 800 go, Columbus Buggy released 100, and Columbus Iron and Steel laid off 1,500. During these times, as business slackened and unemployment rose, the city faced what one newspaper reporter labeled "the tramp problem." In November 1894, the reporter noted that "every night a large number of unfortunates apply for lodging at the city prison."

Excluded from a major say in city affairs, confined to overcrowded and

inadequately served neighborhoods, and trapped in low paying, dirty, demanding jobs, Columbus workers began to come together to advance their interests as workers. For numerous laborers, ethnic ties were still as strong as class ties, and so their activities were confined to like countrymen. Many Germans, in particular, perpetuated their ethnic identity while confronting class problems through groups like the German Butchers' Association, German-American Typographical Union #19, and *Arbeiter Verein*. Likewise, East European Jews formed the Hebrew Tailors' Benevolent Association in 1906 and the Jewish Workman's Circle, or *Arbeiter Ring*, the following year. Increasingly, however, Columbus workers--whatever their ethnicity--found that they had to create a united front to advance their interests.

The first significant wave of union organizing was sparked by the economic activity of the Civil War and lasted until the mid-1870s. During the 1860s and early 1870s, iron molders, machinists, locomotive engineers, boot and shoemakers, hackmen, butchers, and others formed locals. Moreover, in 1868, under the leadership of the unions of Machinists' and Molders', the various locals joined together and created the city's first central body, the Trade Unions of Columbus. Along with trying to advance the wages and working conditions of their members, these organizations were also concerned with maintaining the respectability of the workingclass. The goal of the United American Mechanics, formed in August of 1872, for instance, was "To preserve our free constitutional government upon the basis of justice and humanity toward every member of the community; to encourage honesty, industry, and sobriety; and to establish a policy which will insure the industrious mechanic and working man a fair remuneration for their toil, and a respectable place in society." The Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen made the point more directly in its motto: "Protection, Charity, Sobriety and Industry."

By 1873, however, America was plummeting downward into a serious depression. With workers wisely unwilling to risk their jobs in a weak

economy by agitating for unions, few new locals were formed and many that had been established during the previous decade faded from the scene, including the central body. This became a characteristic pattern of the labor movement until the 1930s, with workers unionizing during prosperity and retreating with recessions.

When working class militancy finally did reappear, it did so out of desperation in 1877. The spark was an announcement by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad that it was initiating yet another in a series of wage cuts. Soon after, the Pennsylvania, New York Central, Erie and other lines announced similar reductions. Upon hearing the news, railroad employees launched spontaneous strikes that soon interrupted all rail traffic east of the Mississippi and threatened to spread. As riots flared up in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco, the nation was confronted with its first national industrial outbreak. "It is wrong to call this a strike," the *St. Louis Republic* exclaimed, "it is a labor revolution." The *Republic* was partially correct because so many of the people participating in the crowds of 1877 were not just railroaders, but also miners and mechanics whose own livelihoods were shaped by the transportation system.

In Columbus on July 22, word of the pay-cuts led brakemen and firemen to rally at Goodale Park, near Flytown, and pledged to resist the reduction. Elsewhere in the city the engineers and trainmen also met and made strike plans. The next morning, July 23, a band of 300, waxing eventually to 2,000 went through the city calling other workers out to join them. The mayor appointed 350 special police to control the situation, including the famed Columbus Cadets, and the strike leaders also actively sought to keep the crowd under control.

While no real rioting broke out in Columbus, the situation did become tense when the 3rd Ohio Infantry Regiment, passing through Columbus on its way to Newark, was ordered to guard the Capitol Building. The march from the station to the Capitol was far from pleasant with the unit's commander, Joseph G. Ullery, reporting that "even respectable looking citizens were heard to make comments anything but complimentary." The crowd did not

appreciate having militiamen in Columbus and, for a while, held the 3rd Ohio captive under the rotunda. In fact when Governor Young, then at Newark, ordered the regiment to report to him, Ullery felt certain that the "half drunken" mob would attack his columns as they returned to the train station, and convinced the Governor to rescind the order and let them stayed put in the capitol building until peace returned. That was on July 24, when some of the freight lines started moving and various Columbus labor leaders, recognizing that the strike had failed, called for a rejection of mobbism and for the use of political power.

Thus began another pattern in local labor history. Following a failed strike, workers would recognize that they had been betrayed by the dominant political parties and would launch a short-lived political effort of their own. At a mass meeting in late July, Columbus workingmen adopted resolutions denouncing the Republican and Democratic parties and President Hayes, and appointed a committee to take steps toward calling a convention to nominate a labor ticket. The convention was held in September, 1877 in Columbus, and established a state Workingmen's Party. Building upon the cooperation between workers and farmers which had emerged during the strike, plus a widespread hatred of the railroads, and the appeal of paper money to financially pinched urban laborers, the Workingmen's Party immediately fused with the Greenback Party. A significant minority of voters in Franklin county supported the Greenback-Labor party, but in the end the ticket went down in defeat and the party fell apart with the return of prosperity by 1879.

Prosperity also brought with it a renewed interest in unionism. Once again skilled craftsmen joined together in traditional trade unions. The Cigar Makers' #75 formed in March, 1881; the Railway Conductors in December of 1883; the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners # 61 in June, 1884; the Railroad Telegraphers # 38 in July, 1887; and the Bricklayer's #21 in June, 1888.

At the instigation of the local Cigar Markers, Iron Molders, and

Typographers, moreover, the city's unions established the Columbus Trades and Labor Assembly on June 23, 1881, with headquarters at 16 E. Main Street. The Assembly's objective was "to combine all labor organizations into a central body for mutual support and organization," and one of its chief targets was to abolish the convict labor system at the Ohio Penitentiary. For years the CTLA published *The Union Advocate*, which proclaimed that "As long as the bonds of fraternal co-operation remain firm among trade unionists, the enjoyment of liberty and the pursuit of happiness is assured.".

One of the moving forces in the early CTLA was Joseph C. Coleman. Born in Washington County, Ohio on January 28, 1832, Coleman was apprenticed to the tailoring trade at the age of 14. After three years, however, he cut loose, took up typesetting and after an apprenticeship on *The Commonwealth* in Washington, Pa., truly "journeyed" in Wheeling, W.Va., Cadiz, Bridgeport, and Martin Ferry, Ohio. He arrived in Columbus in July, 1859, just in time to become a founding member of ITU#5. Taking up his stick at the *Ohio State Journal,* he remained there continuously until 1895 and the advent of the typesetting machine, when he was declared too old to learn the linotype operators' trade. During these years he was president of #5 for three terms, recording secretary for CTLA for four, and a delegate to just about everything. Now, in the mid-1890s, technologically unemployed at the age of 69--in an era with no social security and limited pension programs--the central body make him custodian of the CTLU Hall.

The revived craft unions and the CTLU were continuations of a trend that had begun in the 1860s and that was disrupted by the Depression of 1873-78. What was new on the Columbus labor scene in the 1880s was the highly visible role played by the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor. The Knights had begun in Philadelphia in 1869 as a secret organization of garment cutters. Slowly, over the next decade, additional local assemblies were formed up and down the east coast and westward to Pittsburgh. Finally, in 1878 the Knights held a convention and transformed itself into a national organization, and in the following year Terence V. Powderly became the group's Grand Master Workman. At one level the Knights were an

organization that tried hard to recapture the bygone days when class lines were not so rigid and artisans and mechanics were respected and integral members of the community. The Order was not a strict workingclass organization but allowed everyone to join except gamblers, liquor dealers, lawyers, stock brokers and a few other social parasites. Adhering to its motto that "An injury to one is the concern of all," it also had a sizeable contingent of Blacks and women in its ranks. The Order's ultimate goal was to replace Industrial Capitalism with a more egalitarian society of producer cooperatives, and to gain this end it relied on education and shunned strikes. Yet, despite the noble stance of the Knights, more often than not local assemblies got wrapped up in industrial conflicts as they pursued the more traditional union goals of more pay, shorter hours, and better working conditions.

The first evidence of the Knights in Columbus was a reference in the *Journal of United Labor* on October 15, 1880 to local assembly 1494. There was no further mention of local 1494 until February 15, 1881, when it was listed with other lapsed assemblies. This began a trend with Columbus locals, where upon they organized only to lapse within one to three years. In all, about 17 different local assemblies appeared in Columbus during the 1880s. Some were explicitly for one craft like #2103 for telegraph operators, #2520 for boot and shoemakers, and #9027 for watch makers. Others were mixed assemblies in that they took in workers from a variety of trades and skills. At least one of the mixed locals was composed totally of women and called itself the Martha Washington Assembly #10125.

The most active group of Knights in Columbus was Phoenix Assembly #2960 composed of chain makers, which became affiliated with both the Columbus Trades and Labor Assembly and the Ohio State Trade Assembly, a development that revealed that there was not much distance between the craft unions and the Knights in the city.

This fact is also revealed by the career of Timothy Shea, who along with Coleman, was one of Columbus's most influential labor leaders during the

closing decades of the nineteenth century. Born in rural Franklin County on September 25, 1856, Shea received only minimal schooling before his family moved to Columbus in 1866. At the age of thirteen, Shea went to work to support a widowed mother and six brothers and sisters. In 1883 he became a charter member of Phoenix Assembly No. 2960, and went on to serve not only as a delegate to the Knights' General Assembly, but to the State Trade Assembly and the AFL's Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers. Finally, Shea was the head the Columbus Trades and Labor Assembly when it finally affiliated with the AFL in the mid-1890s.

Thus, cooperation between the city's craft unions and Knights was quite common. Locals from both groups belonging to the Columbus Trades and Labor Assembly on April 12, 1883, when it sent out a call to labor bodies around the state for a convention to form a state-wide organization. That gathering was held on June 24, 1884 at Union Hall, 20 East Main Street, and out of it emerged the Ohio State Trades and Labor Assembly. The State Assembly quickly became the lobbying arm of Ohio's labor movement, pressing such issues as an eight-hour day law, abolition of convict labor, restrictions on child labor, and mine safety legislation. Like the CTLU, the Ohio State Trades and Labor Assembly was formed prior to the AFL, and for a decade accommodated both craft unionists and Knights until it finally affiliated with the Federation in the mid-1890s.

The American Federation of Labor, itself, was founded in Columbus on December 10, 1886, and again largely through the combined efforts of local Knights and craft unionists. Several of the local Knights assemblies were displeased with some of the national organization's policies and with the tendency of Knights to scab on craft unions, and so they issued a call for a meeting on December 10, 1886 at 146 South Fourth Street to discuss the situation. The young Sam Gompers, head of a moribund group of craft unions called the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (FOTLU), which had not met in over two years, seized upon the Columbus call to rescue his fading organization. He immediately arranged for the FOTLU to meet in the same building at the same time. When so few delegates from his group

showed up, however, Gompers wisely decided to have the FOTLU merge with the larger group of unaffiliated unionists into a new organization, the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

While the AFL was founded in Columbus, the Federation's influence on the city's labor movement was marginal until the turn of the century. As suggested above, until the mid to late 1890s, some locals in the area belonged to the Knights, others were affiliated with national unions tied to the Federation, some locals actually had ties to both, and the city body linked-up with neither. Chaotic as this organizational picture seems, it actually lead to a significant increase in unionizing during these years. Of the 35 locals affiliated with the Columbus Trades and Labor Assembly in 1895, for instance, over half had just coming into existence during the previous decade.

While there is no evidence of unionism among African-Americans during this period, the Knights of Labors' tradition of incorporating women in its ranks still held, although they appeared concentrated in the clothing trades. Two locals are particularly interesting in this regard. The first is the Journeymen Tailors' Union #27 which was originally formed in 1880 as an all male assembly of the Knights of Labor and then joined the National Union in 1887. In the spring of 1890, the local successfully organized the women working in the trade. Shortly thereafter the union posted a scale of prices and a strike resulted with those shops not signing the scale, most of whom primarily employed women. The strike drug on for six months before the firms acceded to the union's demands. This victory cemented the place of women within the local, so that in 1895 of the 255 members, 115 were female, as were two of the officers.

The other interesting case of women organizing in this period is Glove Workers' Union #1, with Lillie McCrum the vice president and Della Shauer the financial secretary in 1901. Apparently, the union was synonymous with the Union Glove Company, or rather the company was a union coop with sixteen employees. Henry A. Van Trump was the founder of the company and foreman of the factory, and was also president of the Glove Workers' local

which was overwhelmingly female. The Union Glove Company touted itself as the only union label glove firm in the United States.

Still, the Columbus labor movement at the turn of the century was predominantly composed of white males. "Men of similar ideas, purposes and means?" a CTLU publication in 1901 asked. "Hardly," it answered: Rather, men of vastly different ideas, purposes and means, to be similarized in action. Men--progressive, tardy, commanding, resisting, liberal, dogmatic, heretical, orthodox, selfish, radical, conservative. Opinions, all shades. A union of 'all sorts and conditions of men'."

The CTLU's statement can be read as a rather polite way of saying that rather deep divisions were appearing on the Columbus labor scene as the 20th century began. One camp consisted of locals tied to companies endorsing the union label. This group endeavored to interest "business, professional, and public men in organized labor," and continually tried to present unions as conservative and responsible elements in the community. Another camp consisted of the building trades which also took a rather conservative political stance but could be very militant on the job site. For the most part the construction crafts kept to themselves, or worked collectively through the Building Trades Council, which was formed in 1901 to aid the carpenters who were in the midst of a major strike for survival. When they did get involved in CTLU affairs, however, they most often sided with the union label folks.

Third camp within the Columbus labor movement was the left--progressives, socialists, and Wobblies. Founded in 1905, the Industrial Workers of the World, or Wobblies, did not have significant presence in Columbus. In 1907 a few workers at Jeffrey's took out red cards, and in 1912, IWW local 54 took pride in its foothold at the Malleable Iron Company, a foothold consisting at best of 19 members. For the most part, the IWW in Columbus consisted of a small band of devoted radicals who staged events like a free speech fight in the summer of 1913 that resulted in a mini-riot and a ban on further street corner speaking, but they did not shape events in

the capital city.

Far more influential were the socialists. Even since the founding of the Socialist Party in 1901, the ideas of Marx took on very distinctive American coloration, more in turn with the values of Jefferson and Jackson. The party itself was a very heterogeneous body containing immigrants and native born, workers, teachers, doctors, and even a few millionaires like H. Gaylord Wilshire, developer of the Los Angeles boulevard that bears his name. Before World War I, Socialists were an up-and-coming force on the American scene, gaining political control of cities as diverse as Milwaukee, Schenectady, and Reading, Pennsylvania, sending two members to Congress, and gaining large proportions of the vote in states like Oklahoma and New Mexico. Within the labor movement, socialists were influential not only in the clothing unions, but with the miners, shoemakers, machinists, and brewers, and one-third of the delegates to the AFL's national convention in 1912 were party members. Since Columbus was both a state capital and a major railroad hub, it is not surprising that the party's presidential candidate, Eugene V. Debs, made frequent visits, and that other Socialist luminaries like "Mother" Ella Reive Bloor and Oscar Ameringer resided in the city for several years.

While the Columbus Socialists failed to make much of an impression at the local ballot box during the first decade of the 20th century, they did gain a dominance in CTLU. Led by machinist James Henderson and musician Oscar Ameringer, the Columbus Assembly increasingly championed the causes of women's suffrage, class-based politics, working-class solidarity, and industrial unionism.

It was this last issue that brought the demise of the Columbus Trades and Labor Assembly. During the 1906-7 period, the craft unionists who dominated the national AFL were seeking to undermine the industrial jurisdiction of the socialist United Brewery Workers and expelled the organization from its midst. In Columbus, however, Brewery Workers #80 continued to participate in CTLU affairs. However, with the Brewers no longer tied to the national AFL, local stationary engineers and firemen

decided to invade their turf, and a jurisdictional battle developed shutting down production at the Washington Brewing Company. When the labor socialists won a 53 to 3 vote from CTLU delegates to support the Brewery Workers in the conflict, the minority led by the central body's general secretary W.F. Hauck convinced the AFL to pull CTLU's charter. On January 8, 1907 the delegates to the CTLU were informed that they were expelled from the AFL, and on January 23, the AFL chartered a new central body, the Columbus Federation of Labor. For almost two years Columbus had two city centrals, the now independent CTLU and the AFL-affiliated CFL. Gradually, and under great pressure from their national organizations, locals of carpenters, machinists, cigar makers and others moved over to the AFL-backed Columbus Federation of Labor. Yet ironically, they did so without abandoning their more radical principals. Consequently, when in March, 1909 the CTLU itself merged into the Federation, the new president was socialist James Henderson.

The reunification of Columbus's "House of Labor" came just in time, for in the Spring and Summer of 1910 its was to be sorely tested in what has been called "the longest, most bitter, violent and bloody strike in Columbus' history." The segmentation of Columbus by class, race, ethnicity, and residence, along with the fact that the majority of Columbus workers were not union members, meant that most labor disputes in the city were confined to particular sections and subgroups and did not impact upon the whole. The only real exception to this were those strikes involving the streetcars because the traction line was the web that held the city together and all but the wealthiest citizens had to rely on them for daily transportation. Even if they were unconcerned about the working conditions facing the streetcar employees, middle-class Columbusite were critical of the high fares and unreliable service.

Thus there was initially considerable community support when, in July, 1910 members of the local Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees struck the Columbus Railway and Light Company, after it

refused to reinstate four men who it had discharged for organizing workers. The walkout followed months of fruitless arbitration and false strike starts. Faced with a hard-nosed management that shrewdly took steps to provoke conflict, violence marked the labor dispute from the beginning as union sympathizers met armed scabs. Eventually, full-scale rioting during daylight hours and several incidents of dynamiting twice prompted National Guard troops to be stationed in the city. On one day police received thirty-nine riots calls in four hours as mobs ranging in size from 100 to 600 persons attempted to prevent operation of the street cars. Scared over such turmoil, the middle class and community leaders eventually withdrew their support of the streetcar men, and the strike collapsed in mid-October.

Yet while the strike failed, it did boost workingclass solidarity for a while. During the strike, for instance, fifty-three city policemen refused to cross the picket line and protect cars as ordered. Cleveland radical Max Hayes, writing to the *Columbus Socialist* in July, 1911 remarked that since the strike, the city's workers had "at last become class conscious."

And so it seemed, for in the election of November, 1911, the local Socialist Party made an impressive showing in the mayors race and actually elected four city council members, two members to the board of education, including its first female member, and the city's personal property tax assessor. For a moment it truly appeared as if a new age was dawning on the Columbus scene. But before long it became apparent that the small socialist minority--4 votes on a 19-member city council--were unable to introduce any fundamental change. When the Socialists proved unable to deliver on their election promises--including public ownership of the street railways--they were voted out of office and the old party hacks reelected.

The defeat of the 1910 Street Car Strike and the failure of the Socialists to capitalize on their post-strike electoral victories brought an end to a particularly vibrant phase of Columbus labor history. Not until the mid-1930s would the city's labor movement again dominate the front pages of the local press. Rather, beginning in August, 1914 the Columbus

newspapers focused on the armies rolling across Europe, and on the United State's desire first to avoid the conflict, then to be prepared for it, and finally, with Congress passing a Declaration of War in April, 1917, to successfully conclude the "War to End all Wars."

III
FROMTHEDOLDRUMSTODEFENSE
1914-1940

In August, 1914 the great empires of Europe began playing what Teddy Roosevelt called "that splendid little game" and set in motion forces that would once again restructure the Columbus labor scene. For Columbus, World War I drew off over 5,000 young men to battle (including Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker, the most decorated American flying ace in the war). The military crisis also imposed manpower and industrial regulations, and stimulated the economy. In particular, war contracts went to over fifty local manufacturers, and the government build a $7-million military supply depot on the city's eastside. Like elsewhere in the nation, moreover, the worldwide conflict curtailed the flow of foreign immigrants to the city, causing Columbus to have a population that was 93% native born in 1920.

Yet internal migration changed the complexion of that native born population. First, sizeable neighborhoods of Appalachians, particularly from Kentucky and West Virginia, became visible on the city's southside around the steel mills. Secondly, Columbus's African-American population expanded from 7% to 9% of the city's total population as a consequence of the Great Migration. Driven by poverty and racism in Dixie, millions of Blacks were enticed north by promises of jobs and greater freedom. Most of these African-Americans, however, headed to the larger and more industrialized cities of Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and, of course, Harlem in New York City. As a consequence, Columbus's standing as having the largest proportional African-American population of any Northern metropolis soon faded.

Peace on November 11, 1918 brought with it first a post-war depression, and then the Roaring 'Twenties. Increasingly, however, the word "moderate" could be used to describe all national trends as they applied to

Columbus. Because of the city's diverse economic base, it did not feel the post-war depression nearly as severely as other locations. Yet, also, it did not experience the prosperity of the 1920s to the same magnitude as other communities. Although the area's shoe industry, the mining machine business and a few others expanded during the '20s, it was not a period of massive industrial growth. Only two major plants were built--the Timken factory with 1,300 workers and a Ford Motor Assembly plant--and they did not alter the general moderate growth trend.

The city's population also grew moderately during an era that glorified urban life. Whereas in the 19th century, the city grew from one decade to the next by 60%, 70%, and even over 100%, now between 1920 and 1930 it grew by only 23%, and in the next decade it grew a mere 5% more. In all Columbus went from a population of 237,000 at the end of World War I to 306,000 at the beginning of World War II. Still, it was the third largest city in the state.

In social attitudes, too, moderation prevailed. Lacking a large foreign-born population and with the local radical groups defunct, Columbus had no Red Scare in 1919 and little anti-Bolshevik paranoia that characterized the East Coast with its Palmer Raids and Sacco and Vanzetti trial. Likewise, while Columbus had its share of Klu Klux Klanners, not one verifiable episode of crossburning in the city can be found, and the dominant attitude toward the "Invisible Empire" was hostility. Columbus *Dispatch* cartoonist Billy Ireland regularly pilloried the Ku Klux Klan in his drawings, and Ohio Governor "Honest" Vic Donahey vowed to dive the Klan out of the state. The most telling anti-Klan action, however, occurred in 1923 after the Budd Dairy made the fatal mistake of advertising its products in the Klan's *Fiery Cross* magazine. Within days, a spontaneous boycott by the city's African-Americans, quickly joined by Catholics and Jews--the other main targets of the 1920s Klan--led the milk company to financial disaster and the need to sell-out.

For many Columbus workers, the prosperity of the 1920s was real

enough, although it was only a moderate prosperity given Columbus's generally lower wage rates than elsewhere, even for the few workers unionized. In 1928, for instance, unionized carpenters in Cleveland and Cincinnati received $11 a day, those tied to Steubenville Local 86 earned the highest wage in the state at $11.20. Columbus carpenters in Local 200, however, received only $8 a day. Still, that provided enough for a construction worker to move to a new home in Clintonville around Weber, or the Linden area around Hudson Street, budding neighborhoods for skilled workers. And it also allow a trip to Beulah Park, opened in 1923 as one of the country's finest medium-size horse racing tracks, or to the newly reopened Valley Dale on Sunbury Road to tango and charleston.

Yet, amidst the general prosperity of the '20s were significant pockets of poverty. Some were racial induced--Blacks drawn north in the Great Migration, like Warren Pate and his mother, did not find the affluence of which they had dreamed. Rather, at age thirteen Pate started washing dishes at the Southern Hotel at night while trying to get schooling during the day. Some of the poverty was a product of economic cycles--after a wild spurt of construction during the first part of the decade, no more expansion seemed needed and the city's building industry went bottom up after 1927. And some was caused by politics--Edgar Baker recalled how prohibition not only took a toll on breweries but also on the local bottle making industry in which his father worked.

The shallow state of the prosperity of the 1920s becomes even clearer when we look at the records of one of the few "healthy" industries and unions in the decade, printing and ITU #5. For, while printing was a growth industry in the city during the twenties, not all of the roughly 400 ITU #5 members shared in the rewards. Rather, three different clusters of union members existed. First were the one hundred or so men (and two women) who worked for the three major papers. They were most often middle-aged and union members since the turn of the century. They were both the most financially secure printers, and, not by accident, the most active union members. It was they who would earn over the $2,000 annually needed to

enjoy "An American Standard of Living". They owned their own homes, bought touring cars--which were diligently reported in No. 5's newsletter--, and belong to the Typographical Automobile Club. Indeed, 78% of all ITU #5 car owners were employed by either the *Dispatch*, *Citizen*, or *Ohio State Journal*.

The second cluster of ITU members were the 122 in the commercial field, most of whom had become members of Local 5 after the turn of the century. During the 1920s commercial printing was in a state of flux and the turnover of shops was high. Of the sixty-seven shops in 1920, only thirty-three were still functioning in 1930, a 50% turn over. While fifty-two new shops emerged over the decade, as might be expected, the shops that folded were unionized, the new ones that emerged were not. As a consequence of this flux, commercial printers increasingly found employment unpredictable and earnings unsteady, They were forced to move from job to job frequently, or to leave the community altogether. Those who stayed in Columbus rented their homes or resided in boarding houses, moved frequently, avoided the camaraderie of the more successful No. 5 members, and remained aloof from union affairs.

Yet, even worse off than the commercial printers were the roughly 130 printers who were listed on the miscellaneous list of the dues ledger, which meant that they had not found permanent employment in Columbus union printing. They either worked as a substitute in either segment of the industry whenever they could, or they paid union dues but did not find employment in the trade. As a consequence, No. 5 did a brisk business in traveling cards, with roughly one-quarter of the local's membership turning-over each year.

In short, then, even before the Great Depression hit, significant numbers of Columbus workers were struggling to get by. Moreover, many of the industries that were hurting the most were those with had had a strong trade union tradition--the building trades, brewers, glass workers, and as we have seen even parts of the printing business. The Wall Street crash in

late 1929 and the subsequent economic collapse only intensified the situation. The impact of the Depression in terms of jobs is clear. Throughout the 1920s manufacturing employment in the city stood at about 26,500. By 1935, however, the number of wage earners in manufacturing had fallen to 17,516. In February 1931, 300 unemployed marched through downtown Columbus to the mayor's office, where they petitioned for food for the jobless, a suspension of eviction laws, and free supplies and food for school children. Those workers lucky enough to retain their jobs, did so at a loss in takehome pay. In 1931, for example, Buckeye Steel laid off most of its employees and then reduced the days and hours of the rest. In addition, for the "lucky" ones still working, Buckeye lowered wages 10% in 1931, and an addition 20% in 1932. "Our present emergency," editorialized the *Ohio State Journal*, "is greater than that brought about by any cyclone, fire, flood, or other sudden catastrophe."

Each workingclass family had its own saga about life during the Depression. For unemployed Frank Brockmeyer and his new wife, for instance, life in 1933 was a struggle as they tried to get by on the $60 a month his wife earned plus whatever he could scrounge. Each morning he would leave home with six cents for car fare and would head to the Ralston Steel Car plant where they hired people on a daily basis. "It was kind of a lottery to stand there," he recalls. "It was a depressing mess . . ." If he didn't get anything, he would walk across town to Columbus Auto Parts, Timken, and Columbus Bolt Works. Lunch would consist of an apple or a bunch of grapes appropriated from somebody else's yard. In the Fall of 1933 things got even rougher for the Brockmeyers when their first child was born, and they had to move in with inlaws.

Like many Columbus workers, the city's labor movement had also begun the "Lean Years" well before the 1930s. In August, 1927, the Business Agent for the Columbus Federation of Labor told the delegates that something had to be done "in regards to the finances," and that his salary had to be paid or he would quit. Conditions did not improve over the next four months, so that the CFL was forced to make the Business Agent a part-time officer at

$20 a week. During the summer and fall of 1929, even before the stock market crash, there were less than thirty local organizations affiliated with the Columbus Federation of Labor. The roll call of organizations at the meeting of April 17, 1929 showed a count of 11 present and 18 absent, an attendance pattern that remained constant. By the time Dale Stumps assumed the presidency of the local federation in February 1931, the financial situation was so dire that he pushed through an increase in per capita dues, appointed special organizers to raise membership, and created a special committee to cut expenses. But nothing worked, causing Stumps to twice try to resign, only to be turned down because no one could be found willing to take his place.

Such a situation encouraged two parallel developments. On the one hand, leadership positions fell to the older, established, and conservative labor leaders who sought simply to preserve the CFL in the face of hard times. On the other hand, the general apathy and inactivity in the federation created an opportunity for younger, more progressive and ambitious unionists to gain positions on committees and lesser offices. The progressives gained further strength in the Federation in 1934 as a consequence of an increase in unionizing activity following the passage by Congress of the National Industrial Recovery Act. And even though many of the locals formed at that time quickly faded from the scene, individual progressive unionists maintained their toehold in the federation.

One such progressive was G. George DeNucci. Born in Italy in 1902, in 1906 his family immigrated to Parkersburg, West Virginia where his father worked for the United Woolen Mills. DeNucci graduated from high school in 1921 with a determination that he "wasn't ever going to work in any plant, factory, or anything no sir." He journeyed to Akron, Ohio to join a stable of boxers, but after a few bouts he recognized that fighting was not his calling. Consequently, he returned to Parkersburg to practice another skill he had learned in Akron, pool sharking. In 1925, the United Woolen Mills burned down and the owner relocated in Columbus, bring his entire Italian work force with him. George followed his family and succumbed to factory

work, becoming a skilled cloth cutter. His antagonistic attitude toward industrial regimentation, and the social skills he had learned as a pool shark served him well as he worked himself up to the presidency of local 245 of the United Garment Workers in 1930 and a delegate to the Columbus Federation of Labor. In 1935, DeNucci became the CFL's recording secretary.

Another of the progressives was Ted F. Silvey, who was born in Manchester N.H. in 1904 and grew up in Zanesville, Ohio. Silvey's father died in an industrial accident when Ted was young, causing him to take up numerous odd jobs to help support the family. The direction of Silvey's life took a turn when his mother became a Jehovah's Witness and moved the family to New York City to work for *The Watchtower*, where Theodore was taken on as an apprentice printer. He moved to Columbus in the early 1930s and became a delegate to both the Ohio Typographical Conference, and the Columbus Federation of Labor.

The Italian Catholic pool shark and the Jehovah's Witness printer were joined in advancing the progressive cause by about twenty five other individuals, mostly in the allied printing trades and the miscellaneous unions, but also a few in the building trades. One or two of the more radical may have been associated with the local communist party, but that was not a significant fact. In 1934 and most of 1935 this group was not an organized caucus and consequently it lacked a formal strategy. Its approach was not to attack the CFL's established leadership directly, but to work away at the edges. In late 1934, for instance, DeNucci successfully moved a resolution to establish the *Labor Tribune* to represent the CFL, which published its first issue on January 18, 1935 with Ted Silvey as editor and DeNucci as one of the three members on the Newspaper Board of Control. The *Labor Tribune* quickly became a force in the local labor movement, and a focal point in the disputes over both industrial organization and party politics. In addition to establishing a labor paper, in late 1934 and 1935, the progressives also took over the CFL's Education Committee and staged a number of meetings in which a core of Ohio State University faculty

members and graduate students, particularly Alma Herbst, Viva Booth, H. Gordon Hayes, and Carl A. Norman, presented seminars on specific labor problems and broader social and economic concerns.

The progressive's most direct action in the cause of industrial unionism, however, was to pressure the CFL's Organization Committee to be more aggressive. In September, 1934 Jacob Myers, one of the progressives and a member of the Committee, made a public plea for better cooperation from the members of the committee so that it could respond to calls for assistance. Myers's comments irritated fellow committee member George Strain of the Sheetmetal Workers and Building Trades Council, and so he resigned. His places was taken by another progressive, allowing the committee in November, 1934 to propose at a CFL meeting a motion calling for "a policy on organization such as putting the entire personnel of an industry under one head." As had happened to a similar motion at the recent 1934 San Francisco AFL convention, the committee's motion was weakened by an amendment requiring the mutual agreement of the unions involved in such industries.

Still throughout the spring and summer of 1935, the progressives maintained pressure on the CFL to take in more members and to support more vigorously the visible upsurge in working-class militancy occurring in the city. The August 16, 1935 issue of *Labor Tribune*, for instance, reported strikes at the Columbus Packing Company, then in its twenty-second week with the officials of the company refusing to even consider a settlement; at the Hercules Clothing Company, then in its second week with eight hundred workers on the picket line resisting a twenty percent wage cut; on area W.P.A. projects by building tradesmen called to protect prevailing rates of pay for skilled workers; and at Hills Cab company because a union man was discharged without a hearing in violation of the contract.

Capitalizing on this momentum, Lew Johnson of ITU #5 invited DeNucci, Silvey, and five other individuals to attend a dinner at the Dispatch Country Club on September 30, 1935, out of which emerged a functioning progressive

caucus . Shortly after this meeting, in October, 1935, the AFL held its historic convention in Atlantic City during which resolutions endorsing industrial unionism went down in defeat and United Mine Workers president John L. Lewis flatten Carpenters' president William L. Hutcheson, a gesture that symbolized the break-up of the House of Labor. On October 20, the day after the AFL convention ended, Lewis met with his UMW assistants Phil Murray, Tom Kennedy, John Brophy, as well as Sidney Hillman (Amalgamated Clothing Workers), David Dubinsky (ILGWU), Charles Howard (ITU), Thomas McMahon (textile workers), and Max Zaritsky (cap makers) to explore the avenues open to advance mass-production unionism. On November 9, these nine men plus Thomas Brown (mine, mill and smelter workers) and Harvey Fremming (oil workers) gathered at the UMW's headquarters in Washington and created the Committee for Industrial Organization (C.I.O.) as an organized bloc inside the A.F. L dedicated to unionizing mass-production workers along industrial lines, a policy the AFL majority had just rejected.

Thus when the Columbus progressives held a second dinner on Thanksgiving Friday, 1935, attended by twenty-five individuals, they were beginning to view themselves as part of a larger effort. As Lew Johnson and Ted Silvey wrote to John Brophy, the new director of the CIO: "We want to lend our support to your efforts and act as a clearing house in Columbus for your promotional and educational work .... In addition to those of us who are printers, there are several pressmen, some garment workers, several barbers, a school teacher, some reporters, a couple of musicians, etc. We want to create a ferment in the local Federation so as to educate and agitate for the new industrial set-up in the labor movement."

ITU#5 was clearly the backbone of the progressive caucus, with funds from #5 being used to purchase in December large quantities of a freshly issued CIO pamphlet promoting industrial unionism for distribution among the cities workers.

In the weeks that followed the pages of the *Labor Tribune* contained numerous letters debating craft versus industrial unionism, with the vast

majority coming down on the latter side. Progressive delegates also took advantage of every opportunity to present the case for the C.I.O. at Columbus Federation of Labor meetings, which apparently were the only activity that enlivened these sessions. As delegate Silvey reported to ITU #5 in December, 1935, CFL president Larison "is unexcelled in conducting a dull and stupid meeting. Attendance continually declining." Yet in an ironic way, Larison, an AFL supporter, was valuable to the progressives by the way he alienated everyone. Larison, Silvey observed, is "an expert in sneers, sneers at inactive members for doing nothing and sneers at active ones or daring to disagree with him, sneers at the *Labor Tribune*, sneers at social workers, college professors, sneers at vocational guidance and every new idea he hears about. Our fear is that he shall not only sneer himself out of a job, but sneer the Columbus Federation of Labor out of existence at the same time."

Clearly discontented with things going on around him, by January 1936 Larison had decided not to seek re-election as CFL president. On the other hand, the progressive caucus had decided to run a candidate and had settled on George DeNucci who had given a moving pro-CIO speak at the December CFL meeting yet projected a more moderate image in dealing with the building trades than other progressives. Moreover DeNucci, a garment worker, both countered the image of the progressive caucus as dominated by ITU #5, and as a member of the miscellaneous trades was able to deliver the largest block of votes in the CFL. DeNucci's opponent in the February 5, 1936 election was John E. Mannen, the business agent of the Painters and Decorators Local No. 727, and twenty years DeNucci's senior. The election, however, proved a landslide for DeNucci. Of the eighty-four delegates voting, seventy-one endorsed DeNucci and only twelve went with Mannen. When the balloting was over, Mannen then moved that DeNucci's election be recorded as unanimous. Along with a lack of major division or rancor, two other aspects of the election were interesting. First, there was no pattern to the voting, with delegates from the building trades, printing trades, and miscellaneous trades all overwhelmingly going with DeNucci and only the

Painters--Mannen's own union--going as a bloc for him. Second, while eighty-three delegates votes, thirty-six did not. More than likely, these thirty-six reflected the general apathy that Silvey had mentioned in his reports to the ITU.

Shortly after his election, DeNucci let working class Columbus know the direction in which he would lead the Federation: "I stand for industrial unionism, and I know that some of the craft unions are not in sympathy with the movement. Let me tell you that I will not run ahead of the American Federation of Labor, although I have the conviction that new policies and new methods are needed in the labor movement. My purpose is to be ready for those changes when they come, so that organized labor may be strengthened and go on to new victories." Like the founders of the C.I.O at the national level, then, DeNucci viewed himself and his allies as working within the AFL.

DeNucci lost no time in starting a drive to invigorate the Columbus labor movement. He prodded each union local in the city to increase its membership between 1% and 10% and started rebuilding the locals chartered during the NRA days. When Silvey reported back to ITU # 5 on the affairs of the CFL in April, 1936, he was positively aglow: "New administration at Federation changes whole complexion of labor movement in Columbus. Absence of bigotry and selfish ambition; more concern for all workers; devotion to cause and progressive policies present . . . . Organization campaign in progress. Difference between Larison's treatment of small unions and that given by DeNucci. 100 more dues paying members in last two and one-half weeks . . . . Brookwood players (coming) on May 2." By July, Silvey was telling #5 members: "DeNucci's general activities producing results steadily. Work with bottle blowers, meat cutters, molders, pattern makers, upholsterers. School janitors increase membership from 50 to 100 since new administration . . . . Quick and intelligent action by DeNucci saved Buckeye Distributing Company contract with brewery workers . . . . DeNucci consult with Darby on WPA wage

rates. All WPA wages in territory are now "prevailing wages" with 50 cents minimum . . . . DeNucci protested to Governor Davey the letting of state construction contracts to non-union contractors, with result that an order was sent out of the governors office requiring all state work to be let to union contractors. DeNucci's work with governor's office has been satisfactory. Personal connections good . . . ." With DeNucci as attentive to the concerns of building tradesmen as he was brewery workers and school janitors, the first six months of 1936 were marked by enthusiastic unity within the Columbus labor movement. Consequently, when it became known in July, 1936 that William Green was laying plans for the suspension of the CIO unions, DeNucci received the unanimous approval of the CFL delegates to send "a strong protest."

There were individual, however, displeased with DeNucci's close ties to the CIO, but they did not openly question the direction of the CFL until the late summer of 1936. This displeasure centered in the Buildings Trades Council (BTC) and the group's secretary, George A. Strain. It would be wrong to conclude, however, that all building trades workers and their local leaders opposed the CFL's industrial union drift. Strain's backers tended to be the leaders of the Carpenter's, Plasterer's and a few other unions. Some building trades delegates to the CFL constantly supported DeNucci's actions, a fact attested to by DeNucci's re-election without opposition as CFL president in January, 1937. Equally important, however, a larger group of building trades delegates just did not attend CFL meetings. This lack of participation may have been a strategy to avoid being caught between two forces, but most likely it reflected the building trades' historic aloofness from the central body. Indeed, in proportion to their importance to the local labor scene, building trade locals were highly likely not to even affiliate with the CFL, or at best kept entering and leaving the CFL at the whim of their local officers. For instance, during the period under consideration, Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 189--one of the largest and most powerful union locals in central Ohio--neither belonged to the CFL, nor, because of its privileged contract position with employers, worked closely with the BTC

(and actually disaffiliated from the BTC in the early 1940s).

George Strain's own motives for challenging DeNucci and the CFL's industrial union drift were complex. Like many labor leaders and unionists of the period--including, we must remember, A. Philip Randolph, David Dubinsky, Charles Howard, and Max Zaritsky--Strain held a strong commitment to the AFL, and could not accept a divided labor movement. Moreover, like so many craft unionists, Strain felt no bonds with mass-production workers. In a letter to the *Labor Tribune*, published on October 30, 1936, he observed that "one reason for the building trades supporting the American Federation of Labor other than their obligation is the fact we must serve a four-year apprenticeship before becoming a journey man, and we are reluctant to place the fate of our wage rates and working conditions in the hands of a predominate group of unskilled laborers."

Strain's opposition to the CFL under DeNucci, however, also had a political dimension, for Strain was in the thick of Republican Party politics and the CFL was clearly going Democratic. Autumn of 1936, moreover, was an election season. As the BTC's representative on the *Labor Tribune's* board of control, Strain argued frequently with Ted Silvey over that paper's editorial policies and whether Republican candidates could have access to its mailing list or advertise in its columns, and when thwarted in September, Strain resigned from that post. Silvey, himself, was not impartial in these matters since in August, 1936 he had accepted the position of director of the central Ohio wing of Labor's Non-Partisan League. The League and the CFL not only worked to re-elect Roosevelt, but ran intensive campaigns against a number of local anti-labor Republicans, including Strain's friend Sheriff Ross Anderson.

Everything that DeNucci did seemed destined to alienate Strain. In August, DeNucci not only participated in establishing the Columbus Labor's Non-Partisan League, but on August 14 he presided over the first major CIO rally to be held in the city. On October 31 DeNucci gave a radio address urging workers to re-elect Roosevelt. And in November and December he

worked closely with members of UAW local 30 in their strike against the Auld company, successfully converting it into a political confrontation with city hall over police anti-strike activity and forcing the mayor to pressure the company to settle.

All the while that DeNucci, Silvey and others were working in tandem with the Committee for Industrial Organization, the executive council of the American Federation of Labor was setting the stage for the expulsion of CIO -affiliated internationals at the AFL's November, 1936 Tampa, Florida convention. That did not necessarily mean, however, that the CFL was directly challenging the AFL, for William Green had articulated a policy that was bound to generate confusion. On September 5, 1936, when the AFL executive council was suspending the CIO-linked international unions, Green wrote a general letter to city and state leaders telling them to take no action against any local of a CIO-union in their midst. And again at the Tampa convention in mid-November, when a delegate raised the question of how the expulsion of the CIO unions affected city and state central bodies, Green responded that they should permit all locals to remain affiliated. Thus, while the United Automobile Workers was no longer an affiliate of the AFL, UAW local 30 was an active, militant, and growing member of the Columbus Federation of Labor.

If the AFL's expulsion of the CIO unions gave Strain and other leaders hope that something could be done about the progressives at the local level, the whirlwind of events surrounding various CIO unions, most notably the Flint sit-down strike, encouraged a few more radical delegates to push their agenda harder. Thus, by January, 1937 DeNucci found himself wedged between two positions. Leaders of the Building Trades Council were looking to challenge him for being a CIO advocate, while a small band of radical delegates attacked him for not being more aggressive and open for the C.I.O. The situation flared up at the January 20, 1937 meeting of the CFL, when, shortly after DeNucci's unanimous re-election, Steve Grattan, a delegate from ITU #5, and S.C. Newman, from the Ohio State University local of the American Federation of Teachers, introduced a resolution supporting the

Flint sit-down strikers in their struggle against General Motors. The resolution contained bitting language condemning various craft unions "who are guilty of running strike-breakers through the picket lines . . ." To avoid a confrontation, DeNucci quickly rules the motion out of order because it lacked facts to prove its inflammatory statements. After the meeting, Silvey and other progressive cornered Grattan and tried to dissuade him from ever again "bringing resolutions containing violent wording against craft unions, because of fear of trouble from the Building Trades delegates."

Despite DeNucci's caution and Silvey's warning, things exploded at the February 3, 1937 meeting. Harvey J. Lee, the president of the Building Trades Council, and also business manager of the Ornamental Plasters and Cement Finishers' Local 349, asked for the floor as a visitor, not being a delegates to the Federation, and launched into a tirade against the progressives in general and the printers in particular. DeNucci immediately had him removed from the meeting. But before emotions had cooled, Grattan introduced another motion endorsing the UAW's strike in Flint. While the wording of the resolution was this time sober, the debate that followed was not, with Strain and a delegate from the Bricklayers' union raising the whole CIO controversy, which DeNucci had hoped to avoid. Nonetheless, DeNucci let the delegates know that he supported the resolution and it passed by a vote of 39 to 7. Strain then announced that he would encourage the Building Trades to withdraw from the Federation.

When the Building Trades Council met on February 8, however, it decided that a better strategy than withdrawal was to ask the AFL executive council "to investigate CIO activities in Columbus and radical political affiliations of officers and committeemen of the Columbus Federation of Labor." Whether this action was done after consultation with the AFL's Washington headquarters is not clear. What is clear is that Green responded rather promptly, with DeNucci receiving a notice three days later that a representative was on his way. By February 19, Francis J. Dillon had set himself up in the Neil House Hotel. This was the first time that the AFL had

commenced an investigation of a central body for pro-CIO activities, and Green's selection of Dillon, the discredited former president of the UAW and an antagonist of anything related to John L. Lewis's new organization, suggested that an outcome to the investigation had already been planned. For the next several days Dillon met with Strain and other local labor leaders--but not DeNucci, Silvey, or other prominent progressives--and then on Wednesday, February 23, 1937 appeared at the CFL meeting. No minutes have survived of that meeting, but according to a letter from Ted Silvey to CIO regional director John Owens, after George Strain made some vague charges, "Dillon asked DeNucci to publicly renounce the C.I.O, apologize for having helped it, promise not to do so any more, and hand him his resignation as President of the central body. DeNucci, of course, refused."

DeNucci did agree to meet with Dillon privately at the Neil House the next day to see if the issues could be cleared up. Yet Green had already concluded that no compromise could be reached, and so while DeNucci was closeted with Dillon on Thursday April 24, Green issued from Washington general instructions to all state federations and city centrals that they "must decide whether they will be loyal to the parent body . . . or give support to an organization which is classified as dual and rival." In line with Green's new instructions, Dillon again demanded DeNucci's resignation and again DeNucci refused, adding this time, however, that he would offer it to the CFL delegates at the regular meeting scheduled for the upcoming Wednesday. Dillon, according to Silvey's letter to Owens, abruptly announced that there would be no meeting the next Wednesday, as he was going to revoke the CFL's charter. The next morning, readers of the Columbus Citizen found a press release from Dillon announcing Green's decision to revoke the charter, and an open letter to Green from DeNucci defending his actions in general and the resolution supporting the Flint sit-down strike in particular, and again asserting that he would offer his resignation to the CFL delegates only.

The progressive forces in the CFL now moved to protect their organization and its leaders. DeNucci quickly sent out a special call moving

the CFL meeting to consider his resignation to Monday, March 1, and then went into hiding at the Fort Hayes Hotel under an assumed name so no court order could be served. The records of the Federation and of the Labor Tribune were also removed from the office in case that facility was seized. The local leaders of the barbers, printing pressmen, typographers and a few other unions telephoned their national officers to see what pressures they could bring to bear to stop Green. Concomitantly, Owens and John Brophy of the CIO were informed of what was going on, with both men promising whatever help the CIO could give. On Sunday, February 28, DeNucci supporters met in the Birch room of the Neil House Hotel and laid plans for Ralph Ellis, the president of ITU#5, to seek an injunction against Green and Dillon preventing them from lifting the charter. Ellis, Silvey, and a few others worked with the ITU's lawyer late into the night, and the next morning convinced Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Cecil J. Randall to issue a temporary restraining order. That night, March 1, CFL delegates met in special session and refused to accept DeNucci's resignation by a vote of 51 to 2, with two building trades representatives refusing to vote (and almost half of the delegates not present).

For the next three months, attorney for both sides paraded in and out of court rooms, filing briefs and asking for extensions. Reflecting the ideological division between the parties, ITU#5 and the CFL were represented by Randolph Walton and Edward Lamb of the newly formed Lawyer's Guild while Green, Dillon, and the BTC's attorney was Paul M. Herbert, a former State Commander of the American Legion and a recent Republican candidate for Lieutenant Governor. (In 1938, he was elected to that office under Governor John Bricker.) Yet, despite rather ingenious arguments by both sides, a resolution to the situation would not come from the slow moving judiciary system, but from the rapidly unfolding of events on the national labor front.

On March 2, 1937, the United States Steel Corporation agreed to an agreement with the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee--CIO. This development, following but a few weeks after the dramatic surrender of

General Motors to the Flint sit-down strikers established the CIO as an unstoppable force in the labor movement. Consequently, in mid-March, Green sent out another circular to city and state bodies instructing them to "draw a line between the American Federation of Labor and the Committee for Industrial Organization." The April, 1937 session of the AFL executive council, moreover, summoned a special convention for May 24 in Cincinnati to devise a strategy for a counter-offensive against the CIO. In response, on April 24, the national office of the CIO announced that it would begin chartering city, state, and regional bodies.

The CIO's announcement made futile the ITU #5's effort to have the Columbus labor movement united in the CFL. With both the UAW and SWOC actively engaged in organizing campaigns in the area, the establishment of a Columbus CIO body was inevitable. Consequently, the issue became how to keep the CFL chartered, without CIO unions, and in the control of the printing trades and other progressives who had no intent of bolting the AFL. Clearly, to appease Green and save the charter DeNucci had to go. Consequently, on May 5, DeNucci resigned to go work for the CIO in central Ohio. His place was taken by John Getreu, a pro-CIO barber who had long been active with the progressives, who immediately appointed a committee to seek a way to "heal the break in the ranks of local organized labor." After a series of other moves and counter moves by both parties, on June 11, 1937 Green agreed to let the old Columbus Federation of Labor continue in existence and ITU#5 agreed to drop its suit. This time Green wisely sent Alfred T. Murphy as his personal representative to negotiate the truce. At a June 16th meeting of the CFL, all the remaining old officers resigned, and a new election was scheduled.

Thus by the summer of 1937, Columbus had two major labor bodies. In September, DeNucci became president of a newly established Franklin Country CIO Council, made up of 14 local unions and 3,000 men and women. Several of the more militant progressives joined DeNucci in the CIO camp, with Silvey becoming secretary-treasurer of the Ohio CIO Council. These

departures gave the Columbus Federation of Labor a somewhat less militant tone than it had over the previous year, yet it by no means became conservative. Indeed, the CFL continued to be very active in organizing workers after the DeNucci split. John Getreu of Barbers' local 204, Lew Johnson of ITU #5, and other progressives remained very active, while various building trades unions re-established their distance from the Federation. In 1938, George Strain himself redirected his energies into Republican party politics, becoming head of its state campaign for the "labor vote". Upon John Bricker's election as governor, Strain became head of the state's department of Industrial Relations.

While the city now had two houses of labor, they proved to be more cooperative than competitive. The fact that so many members of the local CFL had were supportive of the objectives of the CIO, and that the split in the local labor movement was imposed by a few men in positions of power, had long run consequences for the Columbus labor scene. An editorial in the Columbus Citizen on September 3, 1945 accurately related that: "The break in the ranks of the labor movement here did not leave the rifts it did in many other cities. Both AFL and CIO leaders are on civic groups together. They appear on the same platforms as speakers. They meet from time to time for a discussions of mutual problems." For years, three CFL unions--the Typographical Workers, Teachers, and Brewery Workers--sent fraternal delegates to CIO Council Meetings. And when in 1937, the city's building trades faced a major open shop challenge, the CIO came to their aid. Likewise, as George DeNucci launched organizing drives at various plants around the city, he got extensive help from local AFL unions, like the Machinists, whose national leaders were vociferous opponents of the CIO.

During the late 1930s, then, organizing workers, not bickering, occupied the time of the CFL and CIO. The UAW, having established itself at D.L. Auld by 1937, moved on to tackle Columbus Auto Parts. Over at Columbus Coated Fabric, Bob Boyd, Buz Deaver, and others initiated an organizing drive for the CIO Textile Workers that would bear fruit in 1940.

Even workers who had traditionally shunned unionism caught the

organization fever. After several years of preliminary work, on April 15, 1938, James D. Bowman, working with Columbus attorney Dwight Swisher, hosted the first public meeting of state employees at the Neil House with fifty people in attendance. From this acorn grew, in 1939, the study oak, The Ohio Civil Service Employees Association. Building from the top down, the Franklin Chapter of OCSEA came into being on October 12, 1939 with Laurine Lawson, president, Samuel Schecter, V.P; and Glenn Brackney, Secretary-Treasurer.

Equally important for the long term development of unionism in Columbus was the decision of a young Harry Mayfield to do something about working conditions at the local Timken plan. Getting himself elected to the company union's grievance committee, Mayfield found himself booted out of a meeting with the plant manager, William Fowler, for trying to present his case. Now spied upon and followed, Mayfield nonetheless made contact with George DeNucci, who in early 1938 set up a clandestine meeting in the dark of night at "Red" Malone's farm on the west side of town, far from the eyes of Timken. Present along with Mayfield, DeNucci, and Malone, were Willie Gorsuch, Charles Williams, Harry Hagan, all Timken employees, Perry Morrison of the local newspaper guild, and one I.W. Abel, president of the already established steel workers' local at Timken in Canton. To assure a full discussion of the issues, DeNucci brought along a pony keg of beer to wetten whistles. Out of that meeting emerged an organizing committee that would take one the most vicious anti-union firm in the city during the 1940s.

Most significant for the future of the Columbus labor scene, however, was the decision by Adolph Hitler on September 1, 1939 to invade Poland, launching World War II. The stunning success of the German armored columns in slicing through the French lines during May, 1940, shocked Franklin Roosevelt into initiating an all-out rearmament program for the United States. On August 22, 1940 Curtiss-Wright announced that it would build an expansion plant in Columbus with government funds. With that

decision, the city's economy and the role of unions in its affairs was dramatically altered. World War II, then, ushered in the modern era of Columbus labor history.

IV
A POWER IN THE COMMUNITY
1940-1992

No other event has impacted upon Columbus, in general, and the city's labor movement in particular, as did World War II. A medium size city of 300,000 in 1940, during the war decade it add an additional 75,000 residents, giving it by far the greatest proportional population growth of any of Ohio's major urban centers. Moreover, it was during the war years that "Big Government" truly made its presence felt both as an employer of people and a regulator of life. Between 1939 and 1944, public employment in the area doubled to over 10,000 jobs, with federal employment accounting for almost the entire increase, and in 1948 the city enacted its first income tax.

But the most immediate impact of the war was the dramatic expansion of the city's manufacturing sector with the federal government's decision on August 22, 1940 to build an aircraft factory here for the Curtiss-Wright Corporation. As the concrete was being poured into the walls of the eventually $30,000,000, 25 acre facility, applications for employment were being processed--19,000 of them during the first two weeks of the hiring process along. Of these applicants, 98% lacked previous experience with aircraft production, causing Curtiss-Wright to convert the Ohio State Fair Grounds during the winter and spring of 1941 into a training site.

One of Curtiss-Wright's great contribution to the city, then, was to dramatically expand the pool of skilled workers, which would make Columbus a more attractive place for firms to locate in the post-war period. At the peak of wartime production in 1944, Curtiss-Wright alone would employee 24,684 workers, which roughly equalled all pre-war manufacturing employees in the city, and represented over 30 percent of the

manufacturing workforce at the time.

And most importantly for the labor movement, Curtiss-Wright's workforce was unionized shortly after it began production on December 4, 1941. While no organizing drive is easy, UAW 927 faced little opposition from either Curtiss-Wright or an AFL union in winning the NLRB election. George DeNucci had begun working on Curtiss-Wright as soon as it started hiring, and he soon found sympathizers in key departments of the plant--Waldo Sneary in welding, Avery Dennis in paint, Warren Pate in assembly (and tied to the African-American workers), and from the powerhouse, Frank Brockmeyer. The challenge they faced was not countering company opposition, but of simply getting a diverse workforce to pull together and to avoid divisive issues, particularly those concerning race. In November, 1941, for instance, a two day "Hate Strike" had occurred over the promotion of a black worker to the tool and dye division. The UAW took a firm equal rights stance, and won. And with that victory, CIO membership in the city climbed to 40,000, half of whom were at the airplane plant.

Other company also fell to unionism during the war years, in part because government contracts could only be awarded to firms in compliance with the National Labor Relations Act. On July 7, 1942, Steelworkers won an NLRB election against Timken and its company union, the Bluebirds, and in October they won again at Buckeye Steel. Both companies accepted the new unions begrudgingly, but eventually Buckeye, a local firm, would come to terms with Local 2342. Timken, however, would continue to do everything to sabotage the union for decades to come. Nonetheless, because of victories at Curtiss-Wright, Timken, Buckeye and elsewhere, CIO membership in Columbus increased 300 percent in 1942 alone.

Yet it was not just CIO unions that grew, for in 1942 Columbus AFL membership doubled. Spring, 1941, for instance, witnessed Kentucky-born Charles Bruch marching thirty-two workers out of the Bond Bakery on Buckingham Street down to the Columbus Federation of Labor headquarters to take out memberships in the Bakery and Confectionery Workers' International Union. Likewise, Local 200 of the Carpenters, which had

fallen to 300 members before the war, grew to about 2300 by armistice day because of the plentiful jobs in building Curtis-Wright, the airbase, and other defense contracting facilities.

The greatly expanded city labor movement was far more diverse than that before the war. Most dramatic was the increase of women and African-Americans at both the plant and the union hall. For military contracts to be awarded to Columbus firms, city officials had to demonstrate to Washington an ever expanding labor pool. The area War Manpower Committee applied extreme pressure on every able bodied white male to find employment in a critical industry. It then turned first to white women, and then to male and female blacks, to pick up slack in the non-defense jobs. In October, 1942 the local railroads began hiring women ticket sellers. Then in January, 1943 the county's first woman deputy sheriff was appointed. By mid-1943 the local labor market was so tight that women and blacks were directly recruited into defense production. Whereas in 1940, the Department of Industrial Relations had counted 6,000 female factory workers in the Columbus area, by the Summer of 1944, the count had grow to over 17,000. Of these, 7,300 were at Curtiss-Wright, and 1,700 were at Timken (out of 4,600 employees). Thus, out of a total work force increase of 35,000 during the war years, 40% of that increase was accounted for by women, and 27% by African-Americans.

The challenge for the area's War Manpower Commission was not so much to convince females and black workers to take new jobs, as it was to get employers to accept them. The fact that Timken and Curtiss-Wright employed 40% of all women in manufacturing suggests that the other area manufacturers were laggard in their hiring practices. Moreover, throughout the entire war, female entry wage rates in the city were an average of five cents below male entry wage rates. The case of employers being reluctant to hire and up-graded African-Americans is even more clear. Black employment opportunities clearly expanded during the war, but most often in the service and unskilled fields, and not at the same rate as for white

labor. Thus while Buckeye Steel employed larger numbers of blacks, they were assigned to mainly unskilled jobs. The yard department, for instance, was predominantly black. By way of contrast, the mechanical department, made up of skilled workers including machinists, electricians, millwrights, and so forth, was lily white, as were all the foremen and supervisors. And Buckeye was a liberal employer in race relations. Timken, according to George DeNucci, not only avoided hiring Blacks tut also Italians, and other "new immigrants" from Southeastern Europe. But the worse offender in the city was the electric company which refused to hire Blacks as meter-readers despite hard survey evidence that Columbus home owners had no objections, and also successfully fought off Fair Employment Practices Commission efforts to have it employ Black drivers on the power company owned, city bus system.

Still, despite discrimination, the war and immediate post-war years initiated a civil rights revolution in the city with restaurants and movie theaters integrating, and Blacks making inroads in all types of places. In 1944, for instance, Lazarus hired the first Black woman for the highly visible position of sales clerk, and in 1946 Bell Telephone hired its first Black operators. And in supporting this advance, the local labor movement played a progressive, if not always perfect, role. In April, 1944, for instance, the Franklin County CIO Council held the first anti-discrimination conference in the city at Curtiss-Wright Local 927 headquarters, with 250 white and black delegates in attendance.

The expanded union membership in the city, the need to mobilize all possible workers, the need to keep both strikes and absenteeism to a minimum, and the desire to minimize racial and ethnic tensions in the city, all worked to elevate the leaders of labor to positions of authority in the city they had not experienced in the 20th century. Paul McCarthy of the Columbus Federation of Labor, George DeNucci of the CIO, Howard Porter of the Steelworkers, M.D. Mann of the Teamsters, Robert Greer of the Motion Picture Machine Operators, and many others served on numerous committees and boards to advance the war effort. Moreover, unlike elsewhere, the

the first occurring on September 3, 1945 at St. Joseph's Cathedral, and broadcasted by WCOL radio. Even more valuable was Father Winkler's labor school which taught local labor talents, many not even in possession of a high school degree, the fine points of contract negotiation and labor law so they that they could confront as equals the better educated company representatives. Winkler also instructed budding labor leaders on how to run a meeting and the fine points of rules of order, in part to be better able to confront the radicals and communists in their ranks who tried to gain influence in the late 1940s.

Another supportive connection that developed in the 1940s was, in a curious way, the city's mayor James A. Rhodes. At the beginning of his career Rhodes was clearly a moderate Republican who sought to out do the Democrats in coalition building. Unlike earlier Republican and Democratic mayors, Rhodes did not view "big labor" as a detriment to the city and so, when the end of the war brought a reduction in Curtiss-Wright operations, he set off to convince other unionized-firms to move to the city, most importantly General Motors in 1946 and Westinghouse in 1953. He also proved far more willing than his predecessors to include labor representatives on key boards, particularly the Metropolitan Committee formed in 1945 to guide Columbus's growth. And in 1947, when conservative Republicans were jubilant over the passage of Taft-Hartley Act, Mayor Rhodes declared Thursday, Oct. 2 "Labor Relations Day" because of the "cooperative spirit manifested by employers in Columbus and by the Labor Unions representing the employees . . ." As part of the day's celebration, 40,000 Columbusites watched as 10,000 union men and women from 100 AFL, CIO, and Railroad locals paraded down High street. But even more important than hoopla, was Rhodes' efforts, however imperfect, to present some balance and fair play during episodes of labor unrest. His most notable effort in this regard came in 1949 when the Timken corporation tried yet another of its attempts during the decade to break the union. This time Rhodes used the police to break up the company Bluebirds

leaders of the local AFL and CIO central bodies worked well together. Indeed, in May, 1942 they created the Columbus CIO-AFL Unity Committee to direct their efforts toward maximum war production while protecting workers. The two labor bodies cooperated in promoting rent control, the erection of more low-cost low-rent houses, and better public transportation facilities. They conducted anti-turnover and anti-absenteeism drives, strongly supported the establishment of in-plant Labor Management Production Committees, and kept a watchful eye for violators of price controls.

Of all the area labor leaders, George DeNucci, in particular, was on everything and was everywhere. He viewed World War II as a wonderful opportunity for organized labor to improve its public image and become a central part of community life. He got unions involved in the Community Chest and was the leading proponent of the one-drive strategy. Moreover, he made sure that union members received the credit they deserved as the largest class of donators to the Chest. As a result, in 1950 Frank Brockmeyer became the first full-time labor representative at Community Chest headquarters.

DeNucci's efforts to tie organized labor more closely to the larger community received a giant assist from the the local Catholic hierarchy in late 1944 with the arrival of Bishop Ready and the establishment of a Social Action Department under Father Augustine Winkler. Previously, under Bishop Hartley, the local Catholic hierarchy was hostile to organized labor and reportedly even prevented DeNucci's daughter from attending Catholic school because of her father's union connections. In contrast, both Ready and Winkler had been trained at Catholic University under Monseinor George Higgins in a more progressive theology. Ready and Winkler did everything they could to convince people within the diocese that organized labor was respectable. One strategy of Bishop Ready's was to create the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women with a number of the labor leader's wives actively involved, and with both Mrs. DeNucci and Mrs. Brockmeyer in leadership roles. Another was to conduct a highly visible Labor Day Mass,

and not the union pickets, and sent a clear message to Timken that, while it might be "Lord of the Roost" up in Canton, down in Columbus it was an outsider and had to play by local rules. Not surprisingly, then, the CIO council endorsed Rhodes each time he ran for mayor.

In the post-war era, the establishment of a truly national and international economy, combined with nationwide collective bargaining contracts in key industries, and an ever widening role for the federal government in labor relations, served to place Columbus' own labor history more closely than before within a national framework. During the 1950s and 60s, the strikes in steel, auto, and electric were far more often than not local renditions of national events. So too, was the 1958 political mobilization to defeat the Right-to-Work effort.

Columbus labor also had its own battle over Communists in the late 1940s, although far less pronounced than the battle at the national level which saw the expulsion of several unions from the CIO. While the Communist Party existed in Columbus, it was never as strong as in Cleveland or Youngstown. Here there were two chapters, one located near Ohio State and composed a few academic types, and the other on the southside and more industrial in character. Two major targets of Communist infiltration were Timken and Curtiss-Wright, with the CP briefly gaining marginal influence in the local unions only to be driven out by the membership. The other place where Communists had a presence was at American Zinc Oxide of a Joyce Road, where the CP dominated local 536 of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (MMSW). When MMSW leaders refused to sign the Taft-Hartley anti-communist affidavit, the AFL's Chemical Workers Union moved in and after a vicious and complex strike, won the right to replace Mine and Mill as representative of the workers.

Crooks faired even worse on the Columbus labor scene than Communists. Despite the national uproar during the 1950s over mobsters in the labor movement, there was no widespread corruption in Columbus. Indeed, the two events that stand out in this regard concern local labor shaking off corrupt internationals. One was Local 57 of the Bakery and Confectionery

Workers' International Union under Charles Brush, who upon being convinced of the corrupt practices charges that lead to the International's ouster from the AFL in 1957, on May 19, 1959 at a mass meeting at Vets Memorial voted to disaffiliate and join the newly created American Bakery and Confectionery Workers. The second event involves a pugnacious fellow named William J. Dobbins, who after a two year struggle, on July 25, 1962 lead the warehousemen from A&P, Albers, Ohio Cartage, and Kroger's out Teamster local 413 and into the Drivers and Warehousemen's Directly Affiliated Union Local 3027 of the United Industrial Workers. Whereas Brush and the Bakers were only challenging the International, Dobbins and the warehouse workers were taking on both Hoffa's national regime who had kept 413 in Trusteeships and the local Teamster powerbroker, Dale Mann.

One would have assumed that the long, cooperative relationship between the Columbus Federation of Labor and the Franklin County CIO Council, and the lack of divisiveness over either communists in the CIO or crooks in the AFL would have facilitated a quick merger once the national bodies had done so, but that was not the case. Rather the local merger was so delayed that in January, 1960, George Meany sent R.J. Thomas and Peter McGaven here to conduct an investigation into the bottlenecks. One set of problems was simply that local labor leaders had had more pressing things on their minds, like the 1958 right to work campaign, contract negotiations, and a whole series of strikes (22 walkouts in 1958 involving 15,000 workers, and 24 more strikes in 1959 with 6,000 workers). Another group of problems involved differences between the local CFL structure and that of the CIO, dues rates, the number of delegates each local would have, and how many and who would be the paid officers in the new organization. Financial reality settled this point, with Robert Greer of the CFL becoming initially the only salaried official as executive secretary-treasurer, but with the presidency and vice-presidency to go to the CIO. The third problem to merger, then, became who within the CIO would become president. Logic suggested local CIO president Harry Mayfield of the Steelworkers, but

politics suggested otherwise, as delegates from the UAW-North American Aviation and IUE-Westinghouse teamed up to make Frank Brockmeyer the first president and Frank Larry vice president. Finally, on June 15, 1960, after three years of maneuvering, delegates from the Columbus Federation of Labor and the Franklin County-CIO met at Central High School and formally established the Columbus-Franklin County AFL-CIO with 38,000 members.

The first few years of the new organization's existence were far from harmonious. By November 1960 almost all of the old CIO secretarial staff had resigned from the new organization because of personality conflicts and because "things were being done so much differently" under Alice Smith and Robert Greer. And it was well into 1961 before various sides could agree to launch a labor paper, the *News Tribune*. The new central body came closest to falling apart, however, in June 1961 over the issue of making the executive vice president, Charles Larry, who also headed the local COPE, the second salaried officer. Disaster was forestalled by behind the scene negotiation and a moving speech by Charles Brush. "We haven't been together long enough to be one big happy family," Bruch lectured the delegates, "and when a fight gets big enough it can destroy you. We made an agreement when we merged that when this organization was financially able we would put the Executive Vice President on full time ... The merger agreement was accepted by both organizations after four years of work--it has come down to personalities."

The conflicting personalities were just not AFL versus CIO, but within the two old organizations, particularly the CIO. To smooth over the hard feelings generated by his election as Columbus's first AFL-CIO president, Frank Brockmeyer chose not to run in 1963, being replaced by John Tittle, with Robert Kopp of UAW 927 replacing Charles Larry as vice president. Then, in March 1965, Harry Mayfield of Steelworkers 2173 began his long tenure as head of the central body. Stability, however, was not yet achieved for in mid-1968 Walter Reuther lead the UAW out of the AFL-CIO, causing all the Columbus UAW locals to depart the central body. In a flash,

gone were 11,000 members and over $1,000 a month in dues. For the next two years, the Columbus AFL-CIO operated on a tight budget, unable to send delegates to national community service conventions or to the retirement dinner for William Schnitzler, the national AFL-CIO secretary treasurer. Moreover, the central body lost the services of executive vice president Robert Kopp of the UAW 927, who had been filling in for Mayfield in numerous situations because of Mayfield's busy schedule. To replace him on October 15, 1969 the delegates selected Charles Miller from IUE 746 (Westinghouse).

Despite the turmoil within the central body during the 1960s, there were several major advances. One major development was an expanded role for organized labor in a variety of community agencies. No matter what their differences, the key players in the merger were committed to making unions major participants in area affairs--particularly Brockmeyer (the first salaried Community Service officers for the old Columbus CIO) and Greer, (who from 1953 to 1959 was the AFL staff representative for the United Appeal and Community Chest of Franklin County). It was only natural, then, that they would quickly find a common front in community service work. Through their efforts, and those of unnamed others, over 80% of the central body's membership annually contributed to the United Way during the 1960s. By 1970, according to Charles Overly, over one-third of United Appeal Funds in Franklin County came from organized labor. Moreover, Greer continued to represent the merged body on a host of community agencies including those dealing with civil defense, urban mass transportation, county welfare, United Appeal, Red Cross, cancer, development, and the Boy Scouts. And finally, the central body, following the lead of Jim O'Keefe participated in an bold initiative when it helped found in December 1960 the Co-op Optical Center to dispense union-made glasses cheaply.

The second notably development in the 1960s was the extensive political clout the central body was able to muster. During 1963 and again in 1964, Robert Kopp coordinated a massive "Get out the Vote" drive that saw 35,000

new people registered and 88.3% of the eligible voters participating in the 1964 election. This effort not only put Sensenbrenner in the mayor's office, but placed Franklin County in the Democratic column in a presidential election for the first time in twenty-eight years. It was because Sensenbrenner generally recognized who buttered his political bread that unionism made the advances it did. In the private sector, groups like Hotel & Restaurant Workers Local 505 could count on the Sensenbrenner administration to creatively use the city health codes during it unionizing drive at places like the Jai-Lai in 1972. In the public sector, AFSCME Locals 1632 and 2191 both took off during the Sensenbrenner years. Unfortunately, the county commissioners, on the other hand, voted in by the Republican suburbs, proved less amenable to union persuasion, causing an long labor disputes at the welfare department, Alum Creek, and elsewhere.

By the mid-1970s, this emphasis on the public sector reflected some rather dramatic shifts in employment patterns in the city. In 1950 the largest employers in the city had been North American Aviation with 17,000, Westinghouse with 6,000, Timken with 5,000, General Motors Ternstedt Division with 3,500 and Jeffrey Manufacturing with 2,500. Twenty-five years later, in 1975, the ten largest employers were The Ohio State University with 18,000, state government with 18,000, federal government exclusive of military with 13,000, public schools with 8,000, Western Electric with 8,000, Nationwide Insurance with 6,000, Ohio Bell with 5,000 and Borden with 5,000. Not one of the top ten firms of 1950 made the 1975 list, and by 1990 a number of the 1950 firms were no longer even operating, like Jeffrey and Federal Glass, and others were skeletons of their former selves.

For the past two decades, then, the challenge for organized labor in central Ohio has been to launch new offensives in the face of a dramatically changing social and economic environment. The dramatic growth of the Communication Workers, the Food and Commercial Workers, and particularly of OCSEA after 1983 when Governor Celeste signed the State Employees Collective Barganing Act testifies to the responsiveness of the city's labor

movement to changing circumstances. So too does the dramatic increase in the number of African-Americans and women in both the rank-and-file and leadership positions. This increase stemmed in part from the older unionists "seeing the light" and changing their ways, as the building trades did in the 1960s and 1970s through programs like LEAP--Labor Education Advancement Program--and the Columbus Plan. It also stemmed from concerted pressures applied to the local labor movement by black and female unionists. In 1972, the Columbus chapter of the A. Philip Randolph Institute was formed, and ten years later, in 1982, the central Ohio Chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women came into being.

When it comes to the history of the 1970s and 80s, an historian's records are no match for a participant's memories. Deciding what the key events are in Columbus labor history is not easy task for so much has been going on, on so many different fronts. Clearly significant for the city was the passage of the state collective bargaining act in 1983 overturning the old Ferguson Act The new law has had a significant impact in keeping unionism in central Ohio alive and vibrant at a time when heavy industry is fading in importance. The law has not only impacted upon OCSEA members, almost half of whom resided in central Ohio, but it has also been liberating numerous other groups in Columbus, from teachers, to bus drivers, to sanitation workers.

Also significant were the events related to the outbreak of an epidemic of peripheral neuropathy at Columbus Coated Fabric in 1973. The Columbus Coated Fabric case not only made city workers far more aware of occupational illnesses, but also paved the way for setting federal preeminence in enforcing the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, and in setting the first standards for any chemical exposures.

Several strikes have had more than just passing importance to the city. One would be the November, 1973 wildcat strike at Western Electric by the members of IBEW 2020, a very rough-and-tumble strike that was the longest wildcat in that union's history. Another would be the city's first teachers strike--a four day affair--in 1975. And a third would be the

sixty-three-day long COTA drivers strike in 1986-87. Closely related to strikes would be the militant job actions by the areas building trades against non-union construction: the picketing of Sears at Northland Mall, the 1973-4 physical confrontations at the Continent, the boycott of BBF restaurants, and a whole series of episodes involving Kroger's, particularly at the 12 Avenue and 4th street store.

And finally, being an unrejuvinated 1960s radical, finally on my list I would place the local labor movement's widespread support for the 1970s Farm Workers Grape boycott. It was not only a good cause and a successful fight, but it marked the merger of two generations--one of youth represented by Rita Profant, Rebecca Wilson, and Nick Christoff, sent here by the national AFL-CIO to run the campaign, and one of aged wisdom, represented by George DeNucci, who came one last time out of retirement to show them how things really get done.

In closing, my mention of DeNucci only serves to highlight how much local labor has been blessed with a large pool of talented leaders. Like the list of events I just presented, each one of us would probably generate a slightly different list of key leaders in the city, although some names, like that of Ray Ross of the UAW, would probably appear on all. So also would the various leaders of the Columbus-Franklin County AFL-CIO. In 1971 Robert Greer retired as executive secretary-treasurer of the central body, his place taken by Ralph Hockman of the building trades. Then in November 1973 Harry Mayfield stepped down as president and transferred the office to another steelworkers, John Hodges. In early 1975, when Ralph Hockman died suddenly, Charles Brush of the Bakers was persuaded to come out of retirement and assume the secretary treasurer's post. When Bruch re-retired, William Rittenhouse, who had worked his way up the union ladder in Retail Clerks Local 1059, became the new secretary-treasurer. Then in 1983, John Hodges moved into the state organization, leading to the election of Bill Dobbins to head the central body. These folks have done commendable jobs, but only because, we must never forget, behind them stands a great mass of working people in central Ohio.

RELATED READINGS

The richest sources of information on Columbus labor are the various record collections of individuals and organizations housed at the Ohio Historical Center. This material is best complemented by reading the numerous newspapers that serviced Columbus over the years, copies of most of which are also found at the Ohio Historical Center. The library system at The Ohio State University also contains many unpublished reports, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations on various aspects of Columbus's past. Following is a list of published material available to the general reader through the Columbus Public Library system.

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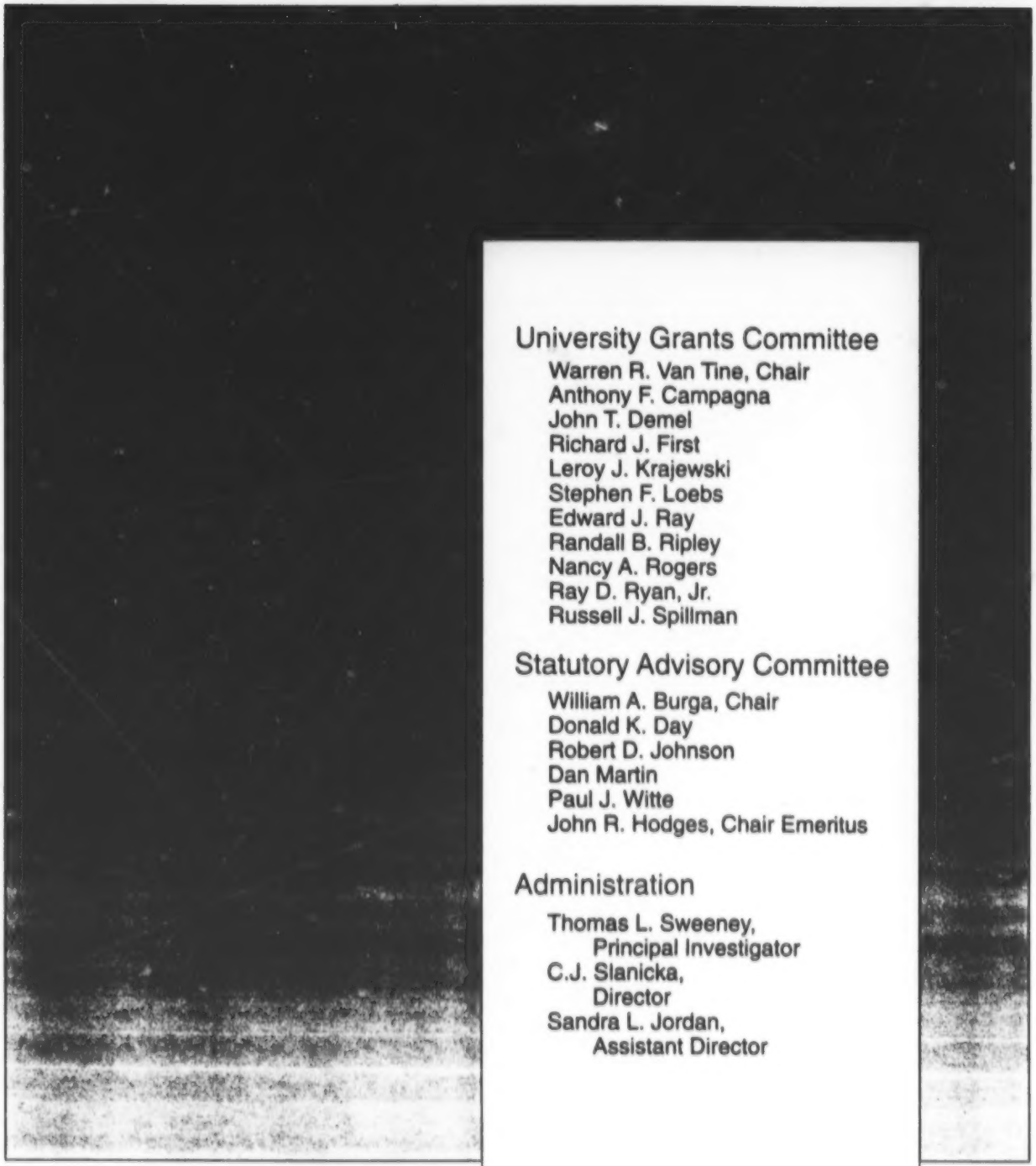

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